SPORTS REVIEW

July 1978

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Wrestling

Bob Backlund's First WWWF Title Defense: "THEY FORCED ME TO WRESTLE HARLEY RACE!"

The Sensational Climax Of...
THE UNCHAINED FU OF AN APARTMEN WRESTLER

Former Champion Superstar Graham: WHERE DOES HE GO FROM HERE?

PAUL JONES: *THE FORGOTTEN MAN*

Dory Funk Jr. vs. Billy Robinson: MI

0 71896 47817 07

How YOU can get in the best-shape of your life!

Imagine, a body building 'System' that can give you a 'Great-Body', in record time!

Most men never realize their fabulous potential!

How would you like to get into shape? Really into shape. Better than you have ever been! Enough to make the girls notice you with admiration and enough to make the guys turn their heads in envy. No kidding! I don't care how much you are out of shape, regardless how much you have let vourself go, I can change your body 100%, all for the better!

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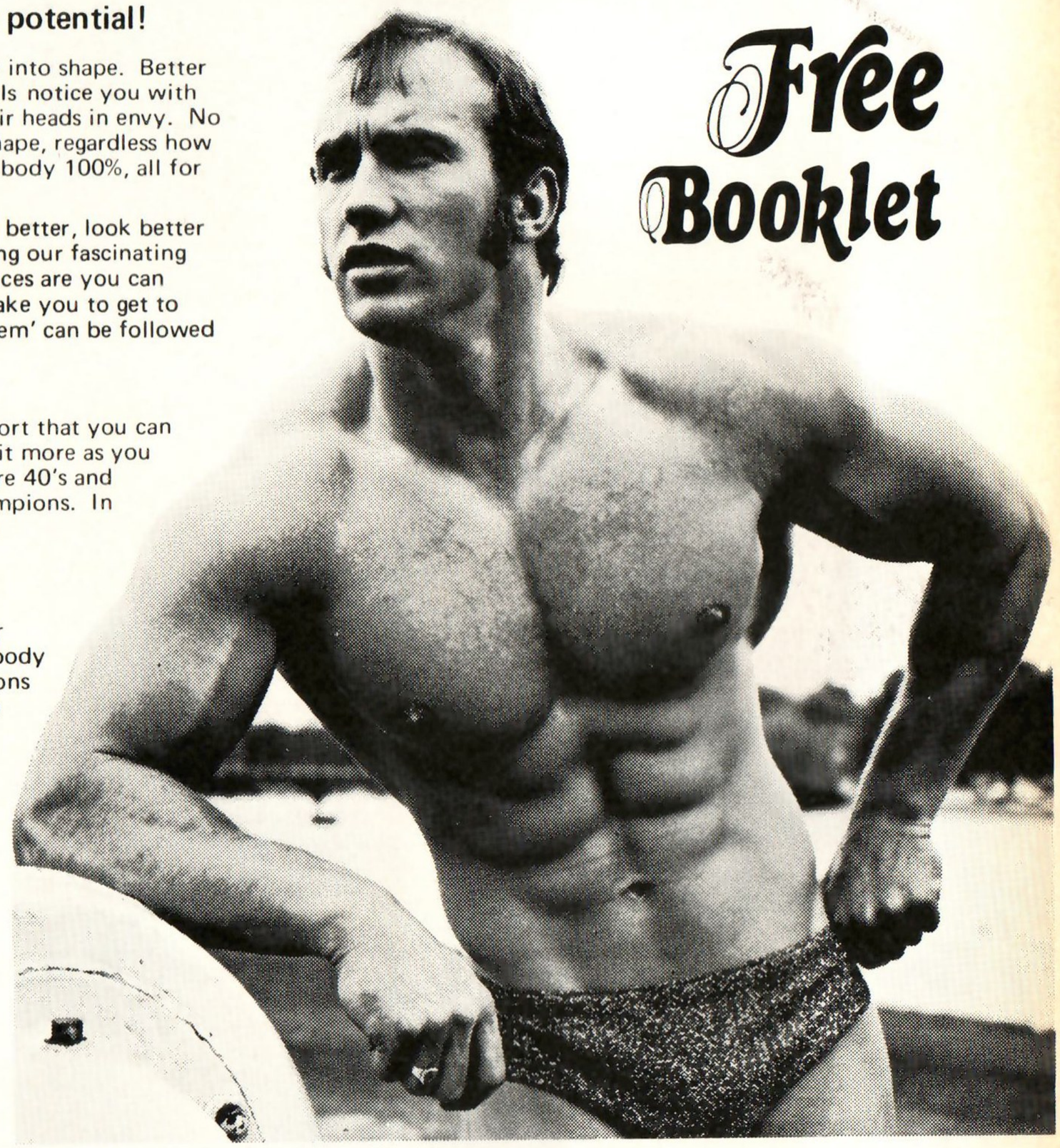

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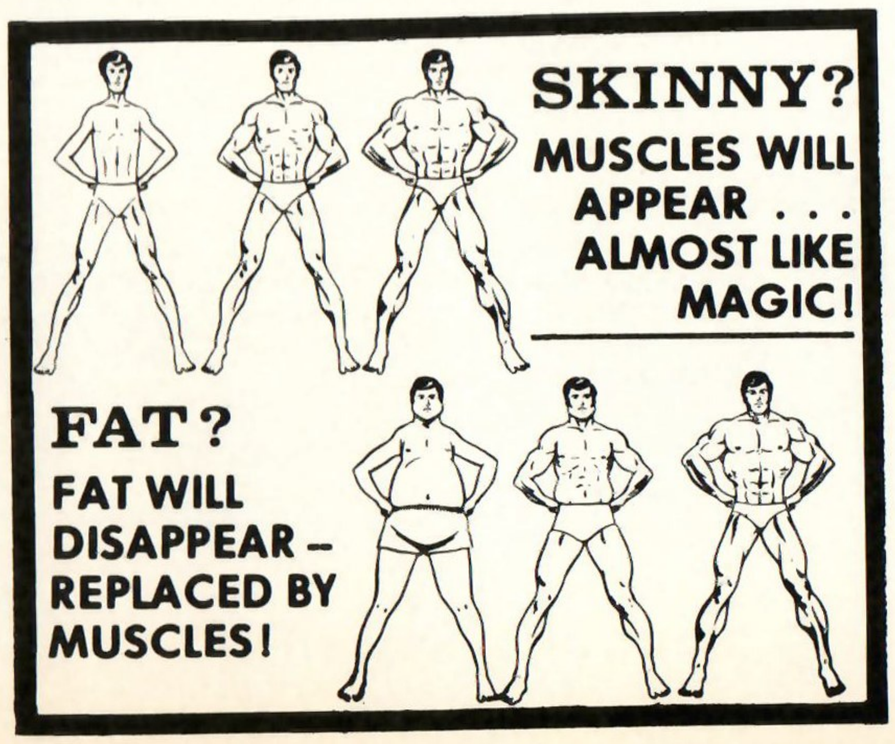

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Wrestling

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At Last...Here's What You Need To Give Your Body A New, He-Man Shape!!!

super weight-gain

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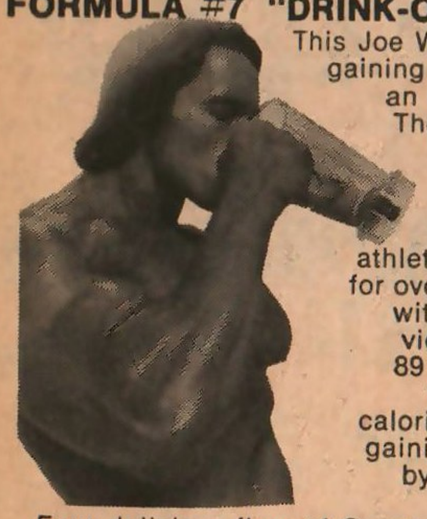

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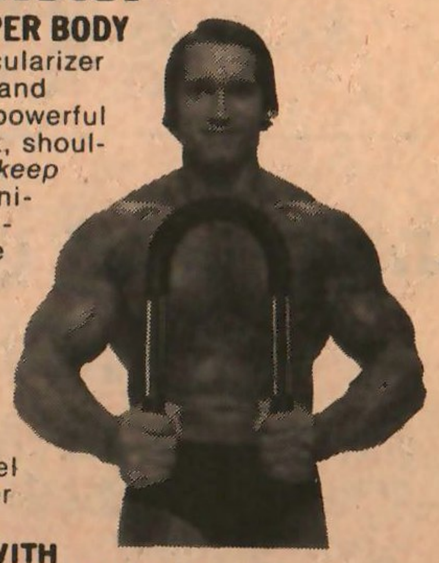
MUSCULARIZES UPPER BODY



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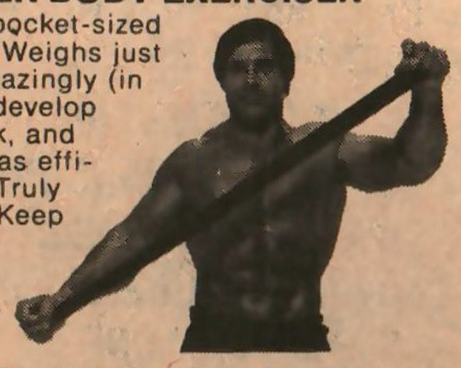

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OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

WORLD WIDE WRESTLING FEDERATION

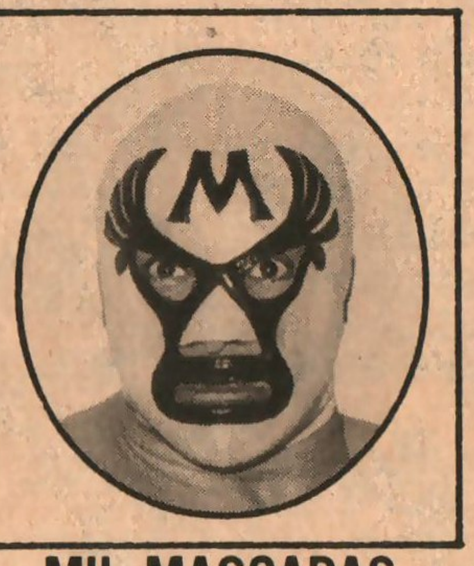
Champion: BOB BACKLUND
1—SUPERSTAR GRAHAM
2—DUSTY RHODES
3—TATSUMI FUGINAMI (Jr. Heavyweight Champ)
4—MIL MASCARAS
5—SPIROS ARION
6—LUKE GRAHAM
7—KEN PATERA
8—DINO BRAVO
9—STAN STASIAK
10—CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW

AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

Champion: NICK BOCKWINKLE
1—VERNE GAGNE
2—RAY STEVENS
3—BILLY ROBINSON
4—LARRY HENNIG
5—JIM BRUNZELL
6—GREG GAGNE
7—BOB ORTON JR.
8—RUFUS R. JONES
9—ANGELO MOSCA
10—SUPER DESTROYER

MOST POPULAR

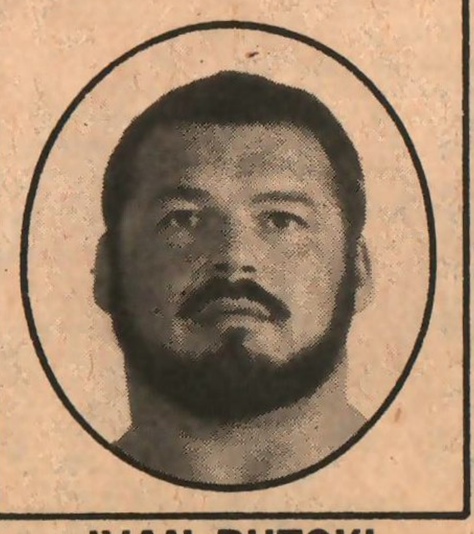
1—DUSTY RHODES
2—ANDRE THE GIANT
3—MIL MASCARAS
4—BOB BACKLUND
5—ROCKY JOHNSON
6—RICK STEAMBOAT
7—MR. WRESTLING II
8—WAHOO McDANIEL
9—IVAN PUTSKI
10—BILLY ROBINSON



MIL MASCARAS

DUSTY RHODES

DICK SLATER



IVAN PUTSKI

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

Champion: HARLEY RACE
1—DUSTY RHODES
2—RIC FLAIR
3—DICK MURDOCH
4—ROCKY JOHNSON
5—BLACKJACK MULLIGAN
6—JACK BRISCO
7—TERRY FUNK
8—RICK STEAMBOAT
9—PAUL JONES
10—STAN HANSEN

TAG TEAMS

1—RIC FLAIR & GREG VALENTINE
2—DINO BRAVO & DOMINIC DeNUCCI
3—MIKE GRAHAM & STEVE KEIRN
4—JIM BRUNZELL & GREG GAGNE
5—PAUL JONES & RICK STEAMBOAT
6—MR. SATO & MR. SAITO
7—JACK & JERRY BRISCO
8—THE VALIANT BROTHERS
9—OLE ANDERSON & JACQUES GOULET
10—TONY GAREA & LARRY ZBYSZKO

MOST HATED

1—RIC FLAIR
2—KEN PATERA
3—STAN HANSEN
4—BLACKJACK MULLIGAN
5—KILLER KOX
6—SPIROS ARION
7—GREG VALENTINE
8—SUPERSTAR GRAHAM
9—SUPER DESTROYER
10—BOBBY DUNCUM

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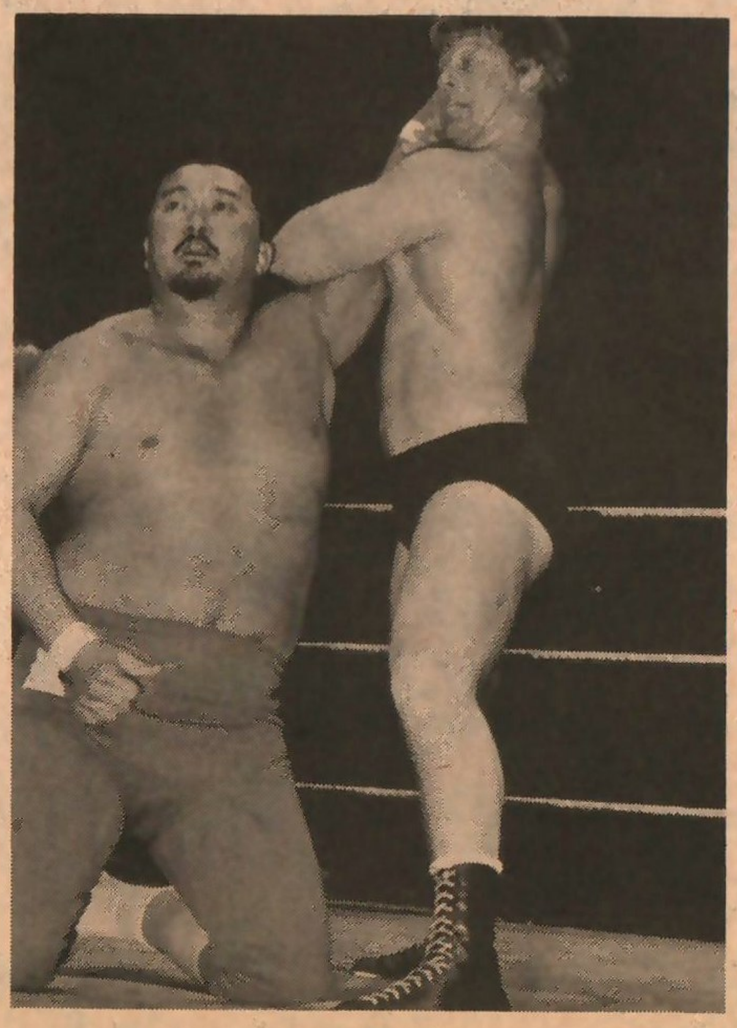
WE ACCUSE

The sport of wrestling, like any other sport, has its share of problems. Some of these problems are so outrageous they need to be pointed out and corrected as quickly as possible. When "We Accuse" points the finger at a target, fireworks are sure to follow!

Bob Backlund is the new WWWF champion (above), but he still has much to learn. Against ruthless rulebreakers like Mr. Fuji (below) and Executioner #2 (left), Bob proved he is a very talented man.



WE TAKE THIS space to salute an amazing young man: Bob Backlund, the new WWWF champion. He did what no other man could do—he took the belt from Superstar Billy Graham, one of the most vicious men in the entire sport. For this, we come here to praise him.

Many great men—Chief Jay Strongbow, Ivan Putski, Peter Maivia, and Bruno Sammartino—tried to wrest the title from Graham. All failed. Then along came Bob Backlund, still a virtual newcomer on the scene. He succeeded where others failed. This was no small feat to accomplish.

How did he do it? What did Bob Backlund have that others didn't? As careful watchers of the entire wrestling scene, we have been keeping an eye on this young man ever since he stunningly won the Missouri state title from Harley Race. At the time, we found this an amazing feat for so inexperienced a professional wrestler. From that point on, we had a feeling that Backlund was destined to go far. But not even in our wildest dreams did we imagine he would someday be wearing the WWWF belt. Bob surpassed all expectations. Is it any wonder that we named Bob as the "Wrestler of the Month"? (see story on page 13).

(Continued on page 44)

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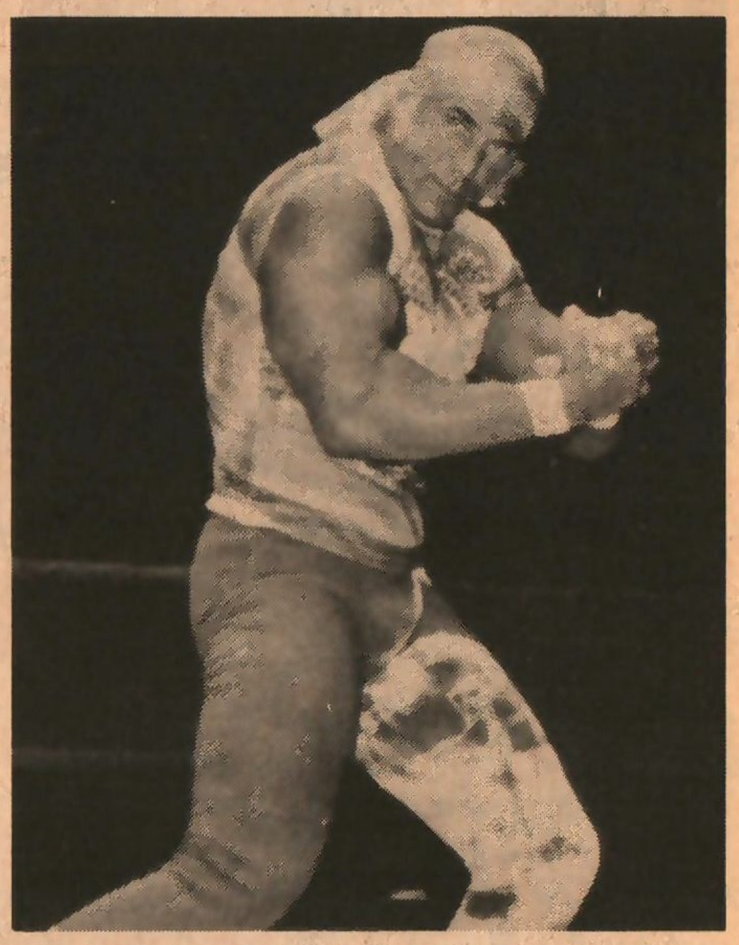

SUPERSTAR GRAHAM

HONOLULU, HA.—Superstar Billy Graham recently made one of his rare and welcome appearances here. Though he may be hated on the mainland, he is a much loved wrestler in Honolulu. At least all the female fans think so. Nevertheless, he was quite a hit.

We don't care that he lost his WWWF belt to Bob Backlund. To us, Billy will always be the greatest. We only wish he would come here more often. That would be fantastic!

—Diane Goh

(Continued on page 46)

Never before in this history of wrestling journalism have so many respected reporters been involved in so important a venture. The best wrestling correspondents from all over the country have been enlisted to report on the news behind the news. Every wrestling fan must consider this the most important column he can read!

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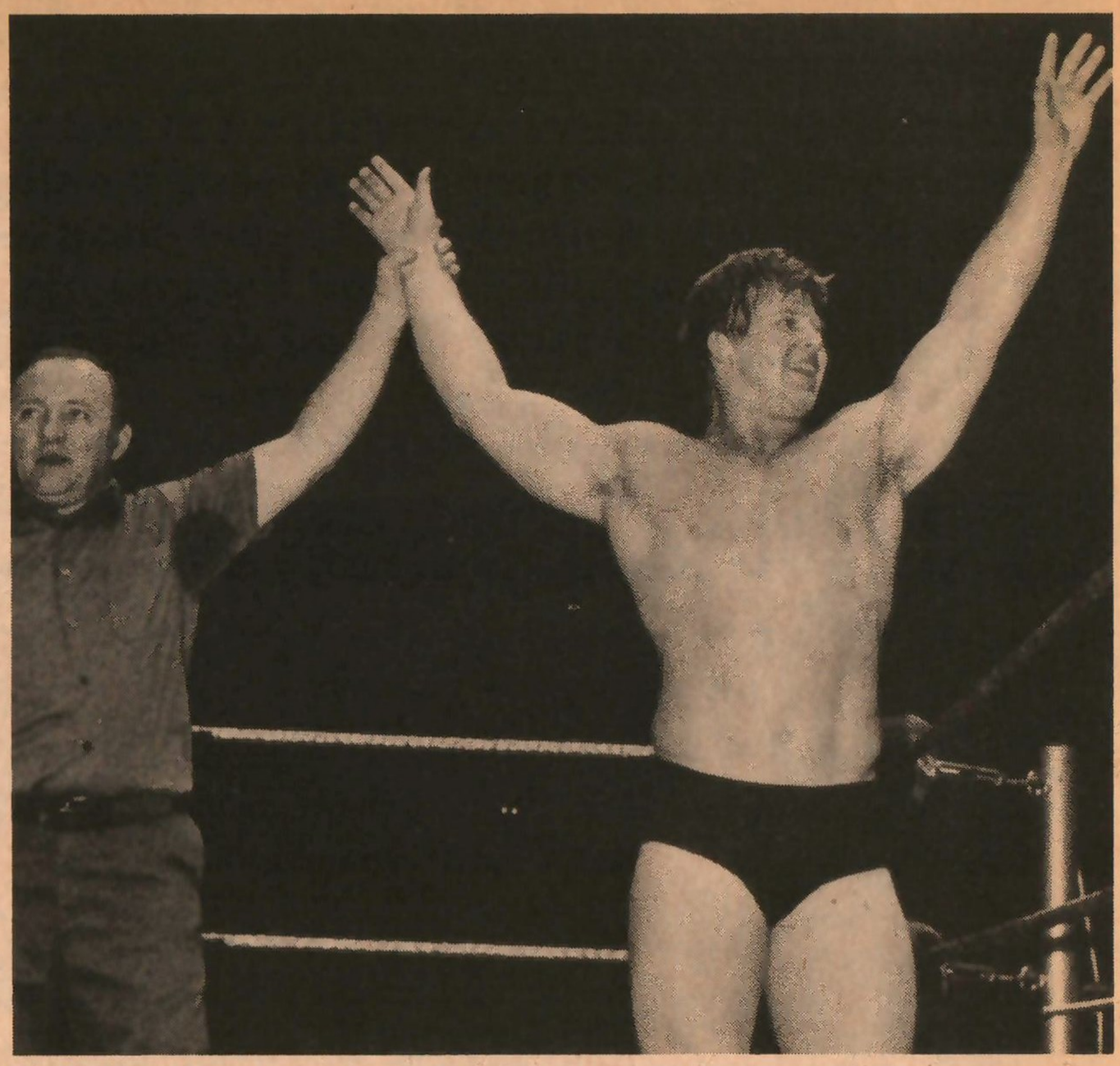


Bob Backlund has his hand raised in victory after winning the WWWF crown from Superstar Billy Graham. His superb actions on that night led us to name the young superstar as our "Wrestler of the Month."

THERE ARE accomplishments, and then there are ACCOMPLISHMENTS. What Bob Backlund did in his championship match with Superstar Billy Graham at Madison Square Garden earned him the eternal respect and admiration of wrestling fans throughout the world. And his capture of the WWWF belt has earned Bob our coveted "Wrestler of the Month" award.

In most cases, the sheer act of winning the championship of the world would be sufficient. However, the condition of the WWWF since Graham took the belt from Sammartino has not been normal. Graham had brought only disgrace to the title. To challenge Graham and win is quite a feat.

Backlund represents what is rapidly becoming the new breed of professional wrestlers. He is young, agile, and intelligent. He wrestled in college, though he displayed his versatility by also competing in track and football.

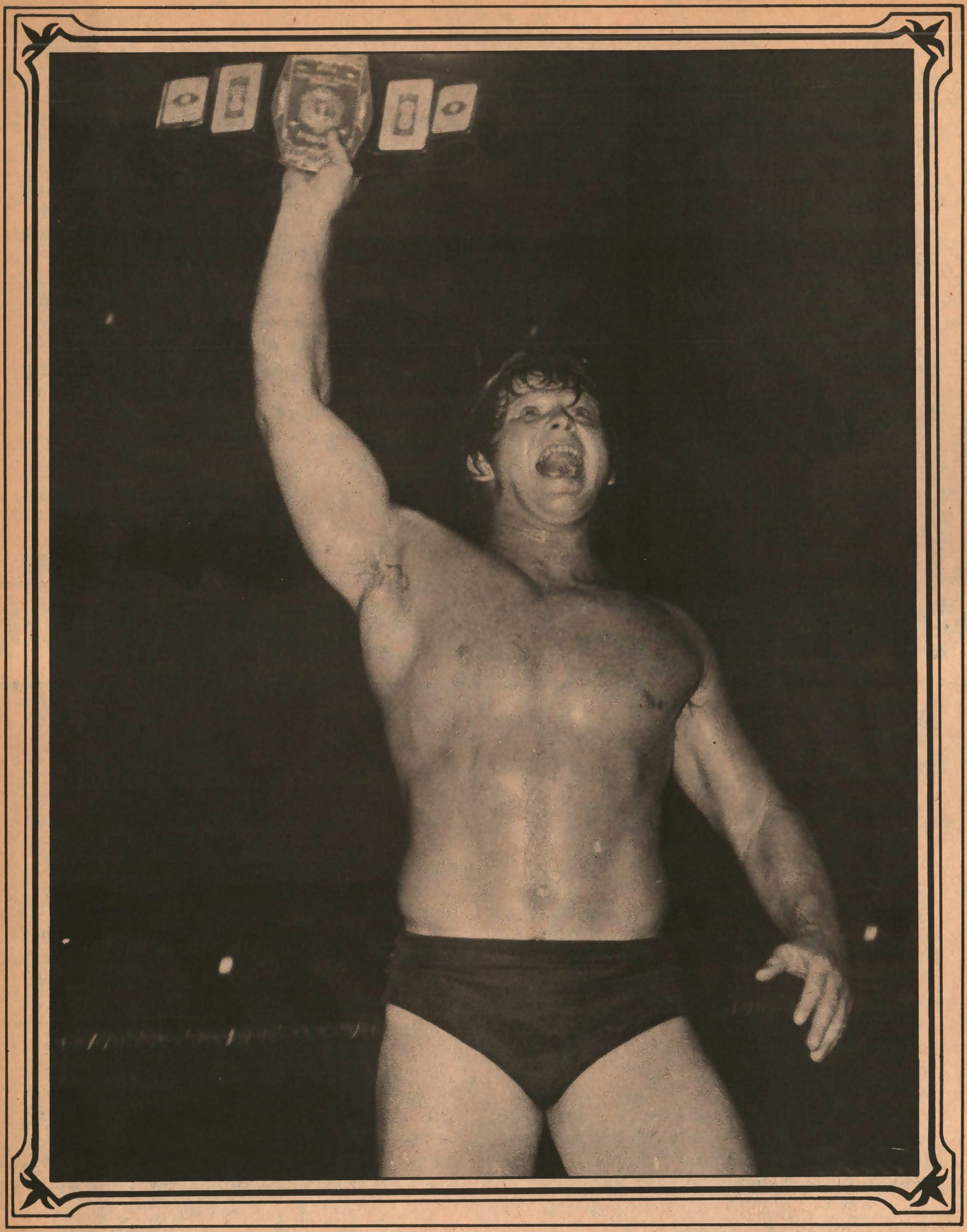
"I'm really flattered to win this award," Backlund said when informed of our decision. "It means a great deal to me. Though to be honest, not as much as winning the belt did. That was the culmination of a life-long dream."

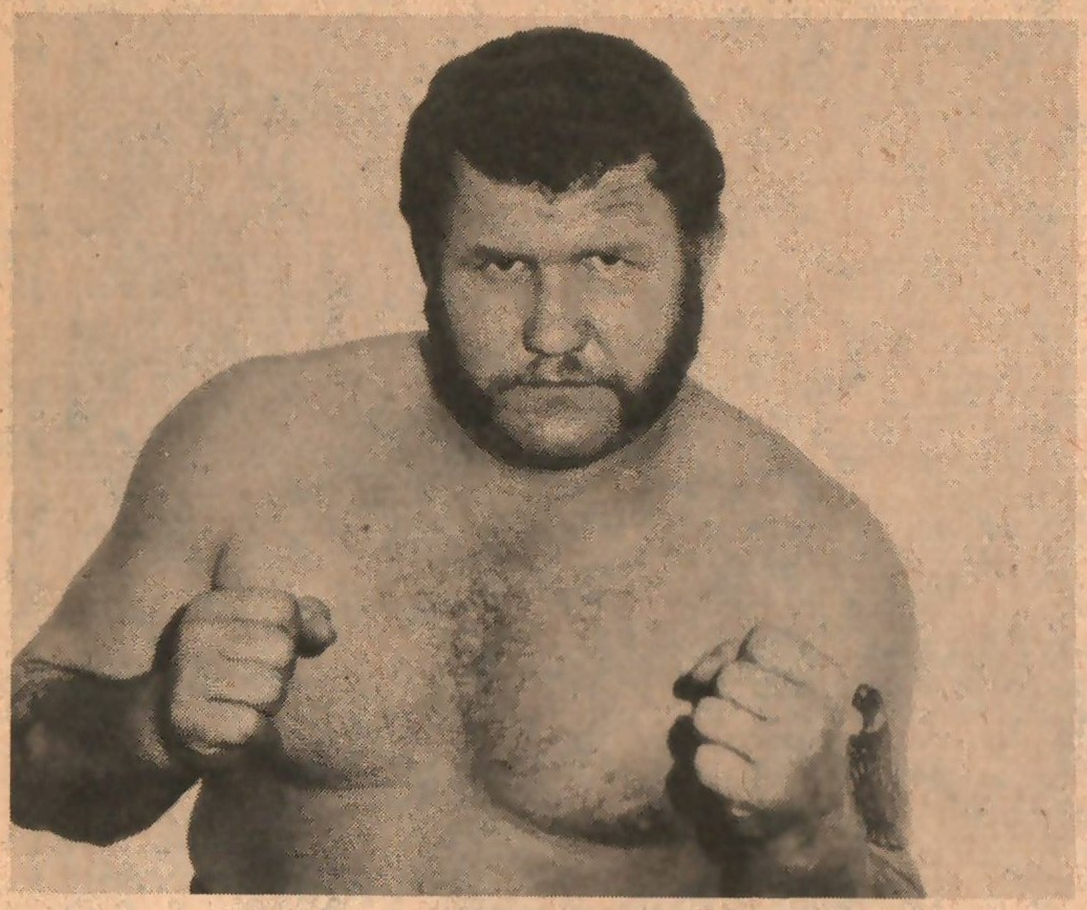
Two-and-a-half years ago, Backlund met Race in contest for the Missouri state title. It was his first big test. He had already run up a string of impressive victories, but they weren't impressive enough to persuade wrestling observers that here was a future champion. The doubts about Bob Backlund ended that night.

"God, was I nervous when I went against Race," Backlund chuckled as he recollected. "I knew how important that match was to my career. I knew if I blew that I'd have a long climb back up. When I left

(Continued on page 48)

Every month, the editors of SPORTS REVIEW WRESTLING search the globe to find the one man whose achievements have surpassed those of all other wrestlers. Sometimes the selection may shock you. Other times you will be very pleased by the selection. But you will always agree our choice deserves to be "Wrestler of the Month!"





POINT: HARLEY RACE

IT IS REALLY unfair for one guy to keep getting shot after shot at the title while other wrestlers, just as good, are deprived of their chance for the belt.

Everyone should have the opportunity to battle for the championship. The way it is now, the same guys are wrestling for the title month after month, year after year. It's one thing to schedule a rematch aand another thing completely when they wrestle a second, third, fourth time, and so on.

You should get one chance and then move

POINT·COUNTERPOINT·POINT·C

COUNTERPOINT: DUSTY RHODES

THE MEANING OF a championship is not to push it into some foolish round-robin. If you buy Race's logic then we should put ads in the newspapers inviting people to come and wrestle.

Fans want to see the best. Period. Man, when you're up there wrestling for the title that means you're one of the best. That's what fans want to see. And if you should lose you're entitled to a rematch. And if you should lose but you're the best around, then you should get another shoot-out with the champ. Obviously, Race is admitting he's scared to face the best.

Wrestling for the title is based on merit, not based on numbers or "frustration." Over a period of years, paying your dues, getting your thing together, you build up a reputation. You don't find out how good you are in a championship match. You prove yourself long before that. The purpose of a title match is to pit against each other the two best in the world; it is not a kindergarten for raw talent.

Guys are real impatient nowadays. Whatever happened to apprenticeship? If you push someone into a match simply because he's been waiting a while without proving himself, he's liable to get killed. The fans want a title battle, not a massacre.

I'm sure it gets frustrating. I was frustrated when I first came up. But I showed the world

over. If you're not good enough to win it the first time around then that's just too bad.

What this does is stunt the growth of the younger wrestlers. They don't have the chance to prove themselves. It gets frustrating working hard and taking on anyone who is willing to wrestle you, only to see one of the veteran guys always signing for the title matches.

The whole point of life is to give new people a chance. You can't get a chance under the conditions that presently exist.

Another thing bugs me. I don't think this is fair to the fans. They are forced to see the same men wrestling night after night. I think they'd like to see a new guy come along and win the belt, or at least get the opportunity to do so.

When the guys know they're almost assured a continuous stream of rematches, it takes away some of the motivation. They know they won't have to go to the end of the line and wait for their next shot. And when they're in there wrestling for the title match, they know there will be another title match soon. I think this takes away from the whole meaning of the championship.

If you don't give young guys a chance, the sport will very quickly become stagnated. Almost overnight. And a lot of guys will simply retire rather than keep beating their heads against this stone wall of tradition. □

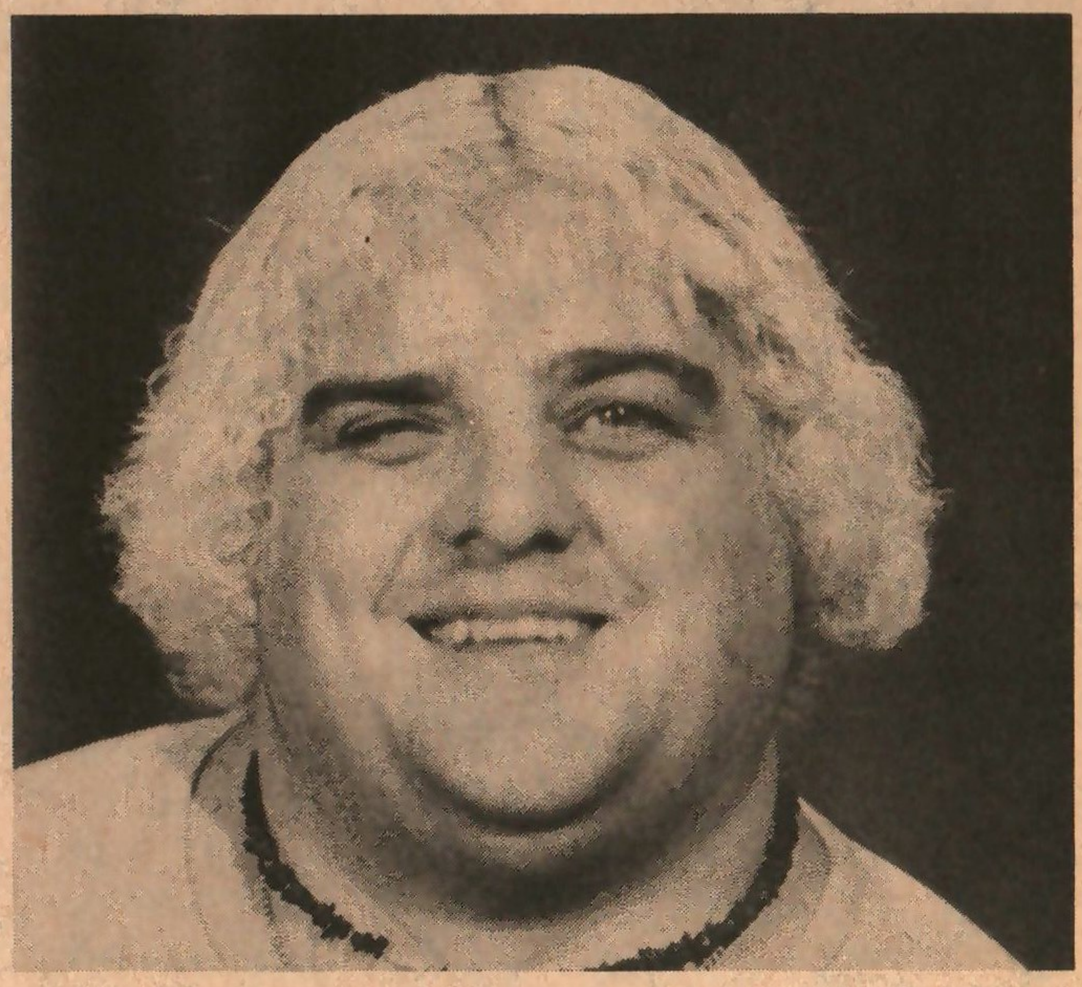
COUNTERPOINT·POINT·COUNTERP

how great I was over a period of time. That's the way to do it.

This notion of not being motivated because you know you'll always get another shot is bunk. If you don't go all out, what's the point of being there in the first place? And if you show yourself to be a lemon, you won't get a rematch. That's the whole point. A bum won't get asked back against the champ. That is as it should be.

You can't tell me the fans are tired of seeing the best. I don't care if a guy has been around for 40 years. If he's good, people want to see him.

There are always going to be new wrestlers. Ones with lots of talent. And they'll get their chance, just like I did. But they got to have patience. □



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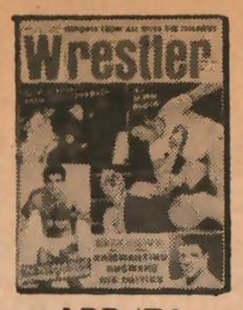
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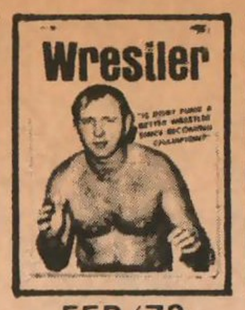
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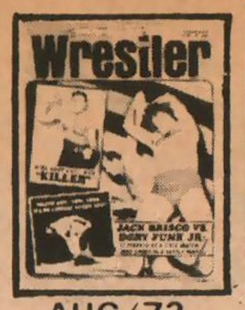
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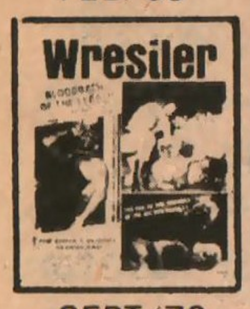
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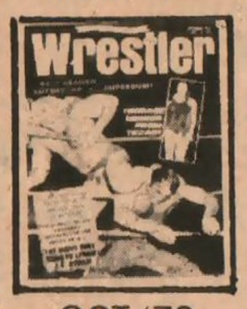
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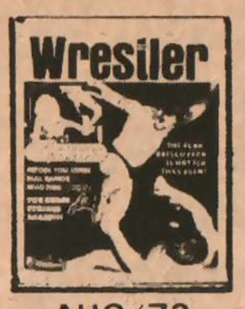
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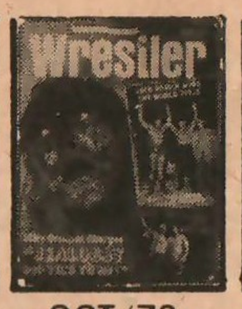
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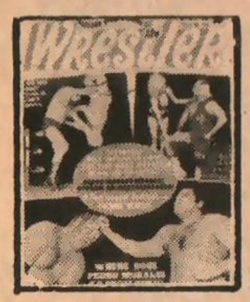
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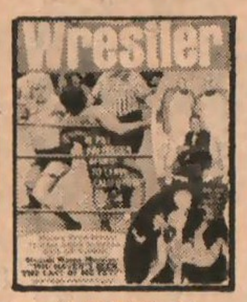
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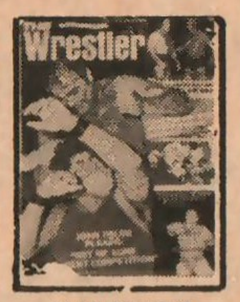
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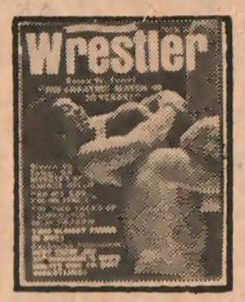
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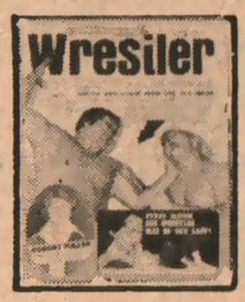
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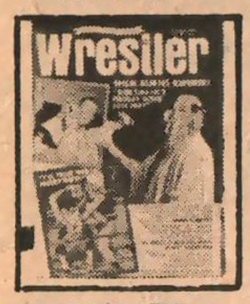
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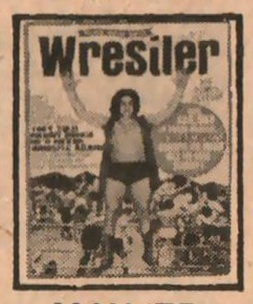
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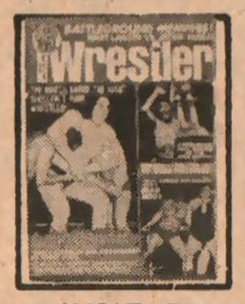
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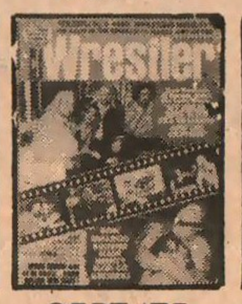
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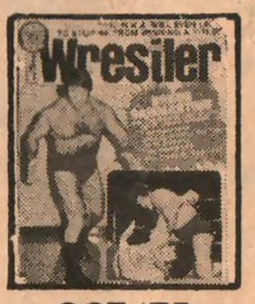
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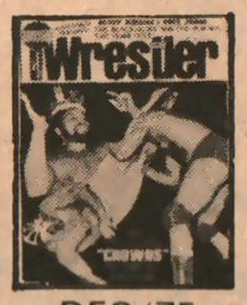
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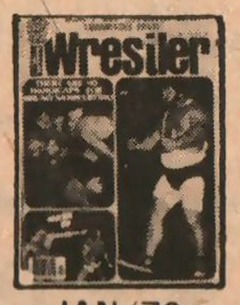
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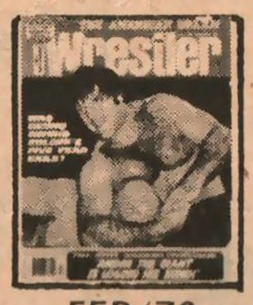
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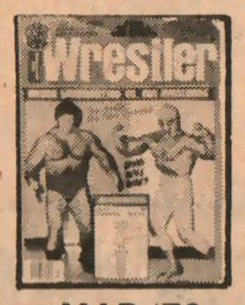
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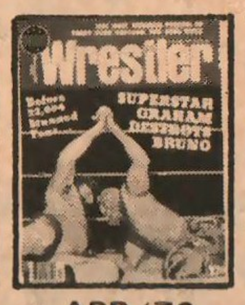
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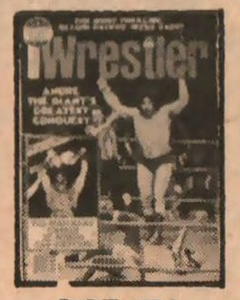
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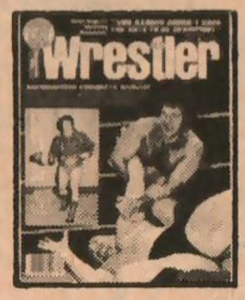
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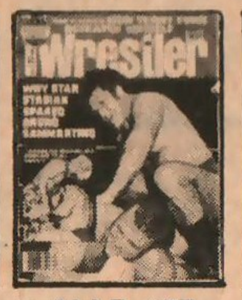
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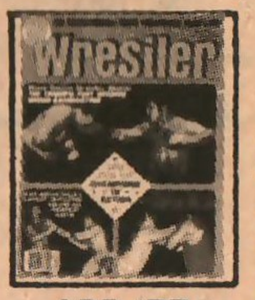
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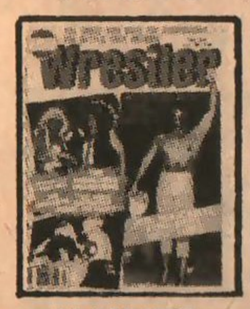
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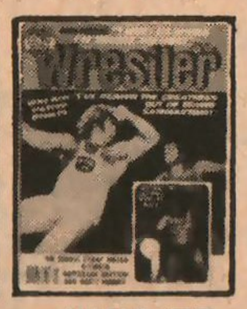
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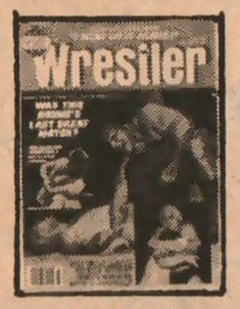
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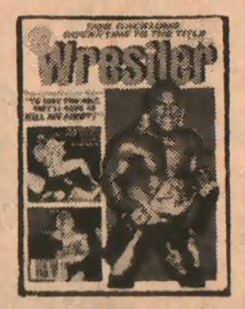
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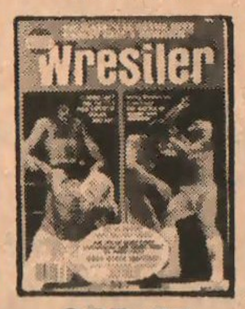
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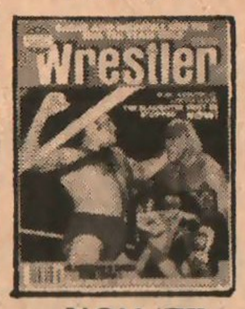
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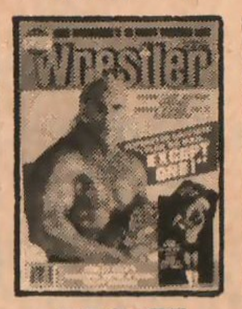
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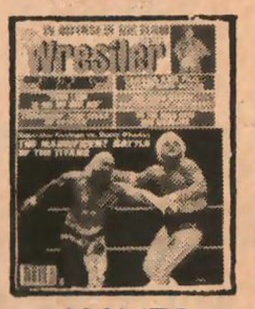
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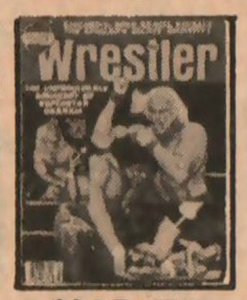
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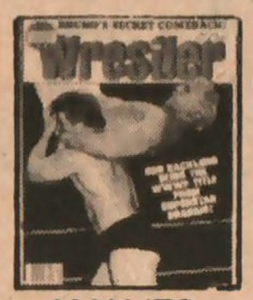
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☐ SEPT/72	☐ DEC/74	☐ JUNE/76	☐ NOV/77
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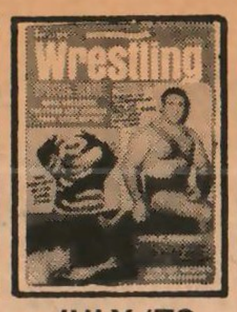
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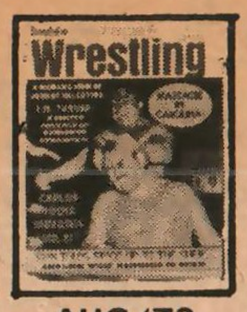
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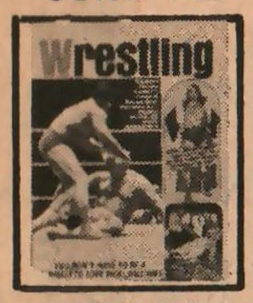
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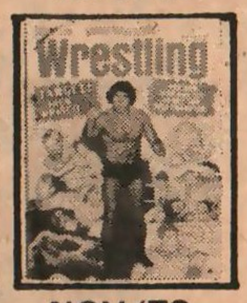
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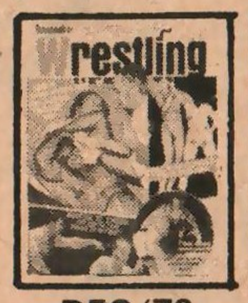
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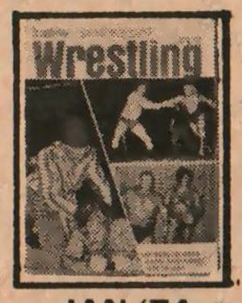
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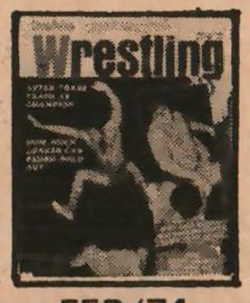
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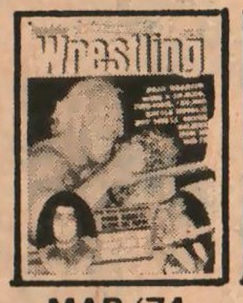
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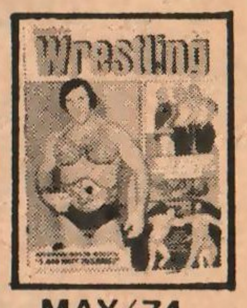
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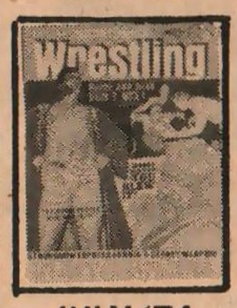
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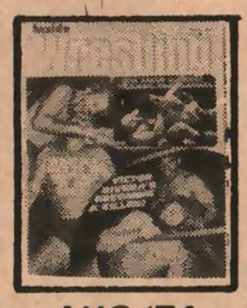
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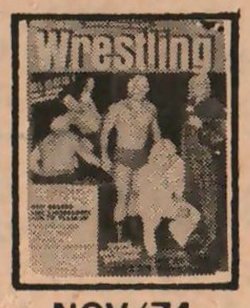
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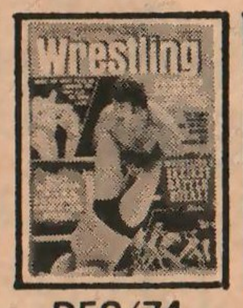
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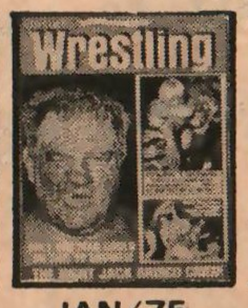
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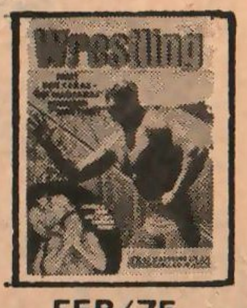
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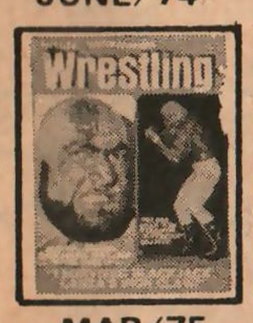
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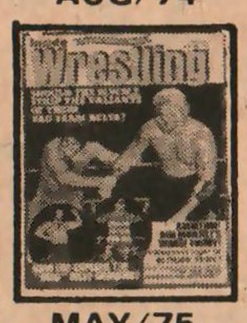
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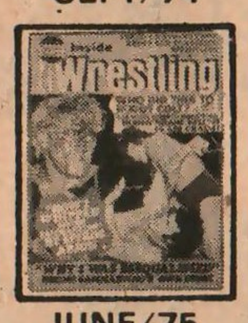
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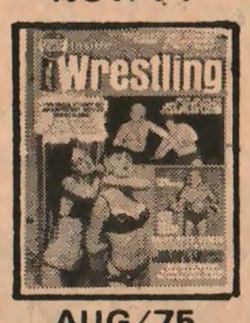
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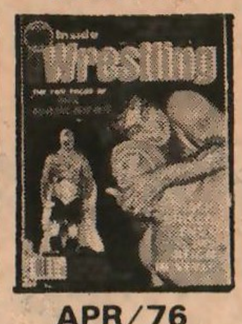
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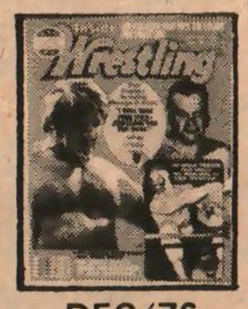
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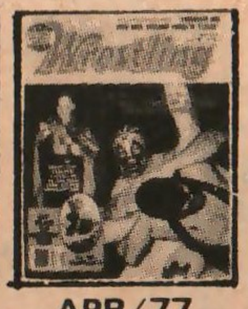
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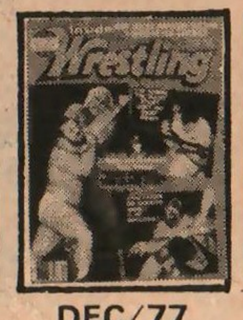
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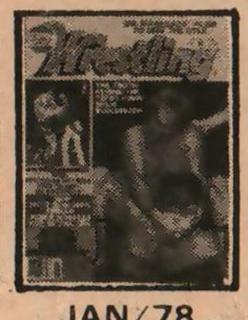
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comes up against a champ he can't win. He may be really popular but that doesn't make him good.

KEITH BRADDEN
Wichita, Kan.

NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT

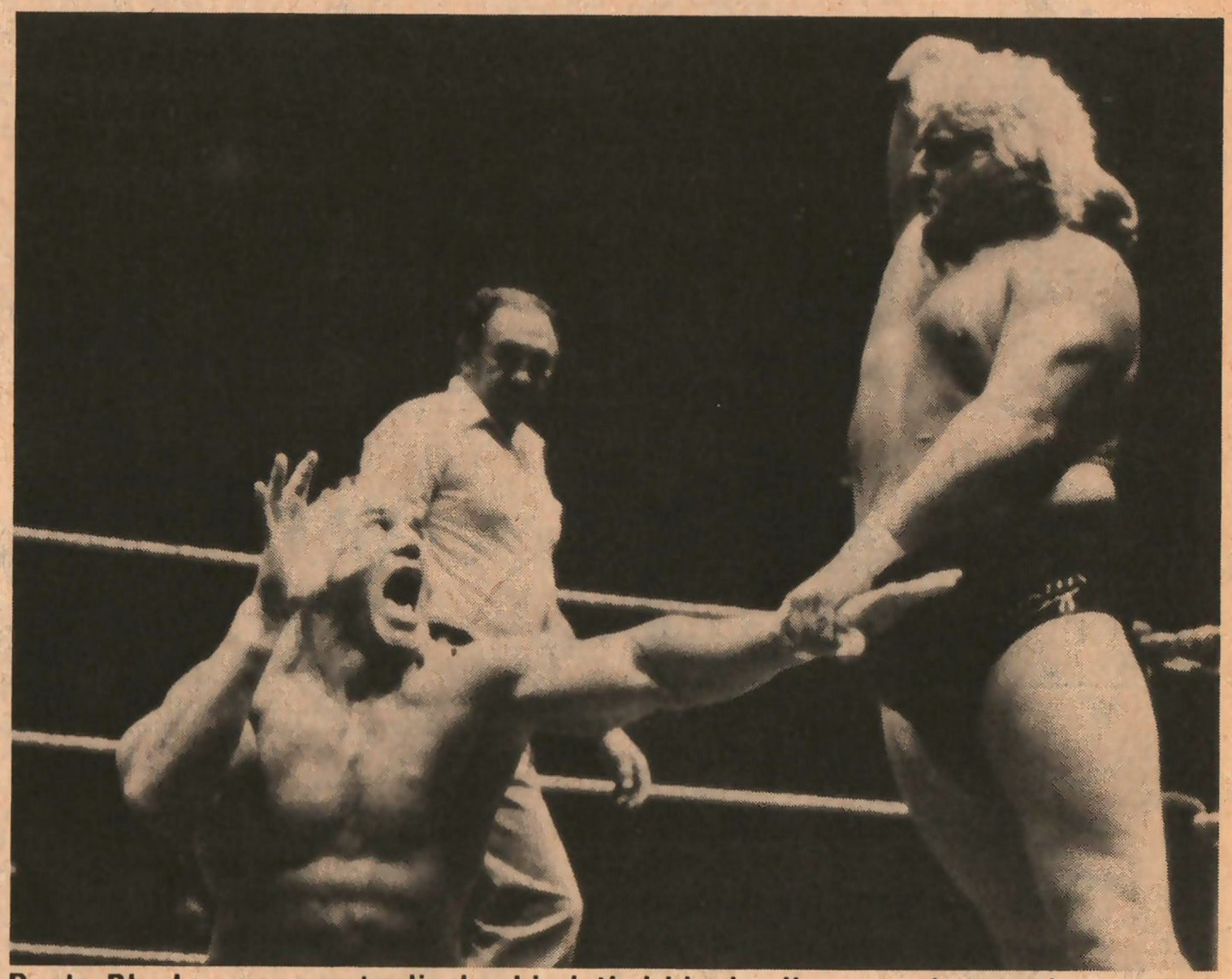
There's nothing wrong with tag teams. They seem to be the orphan of wrestling and I think that stinks. After checking out "The Glory That Can Lead To Doom" (May 1978), I became quite resentful of your inferences.

What's so wrong with Mike Graham and Steve Keirn becoming tops at being partners? They're good friends and everyone knows how hard it is to find a good friend. So what if they don't wrestle alone? It is

MORE, MORE, MORE

What is championship wrestling if not the pitting of two great men like Superstar Graham and Harley Race. My skin actually tingled with excitement when I read "The Most Important Match Of Our Time" (May 1978). My only regret was not being there. I hope people realize how important these are, these Superbowls of wrestling, and have more of them. Too often you see just a mediocre guy wrestling the champ and you're kind of disappointed. There's no way anyone can leave a Superbowl without feeling exhilarated. I say give us more of these matches.

CAROLYN HESSE
Birmingham, Ala.



Dusty Rhodes prepares to display his lethal bionic elbow-smasher on the terrified body of Superstar Billy Graham (above). But some fans believe that Rhodes is overrated and will never be champion.

DUSTY ISN'T THAT GOOD

I know a lot of people are going to be mad at me, but I don't think Dusty Rhodes is really that good. Sure, he has that bionic elbow of his, but big deal. Mascaras has a hundred moves that are better and Backlund's atomic spine-breaker is much better than Rhodes' elbow.

Maybe Dusty thinks he can build his reputation beating on inferior wrestlers, but it's obvious that every time he admirable to see such good buddies become such a success. I think it smells to Jupiter for you people to say it's going to end. Who do you think you are? Probably no one at

(Continued on page 52)

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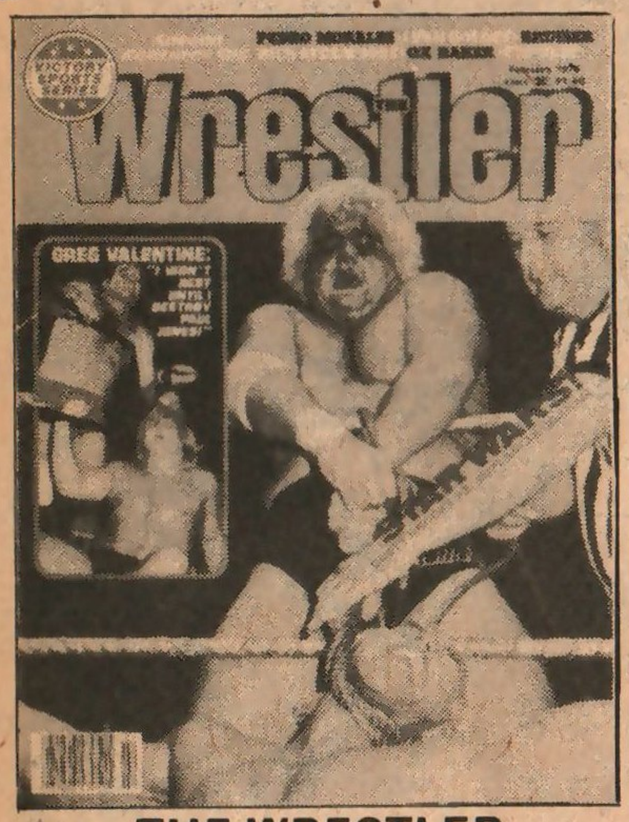

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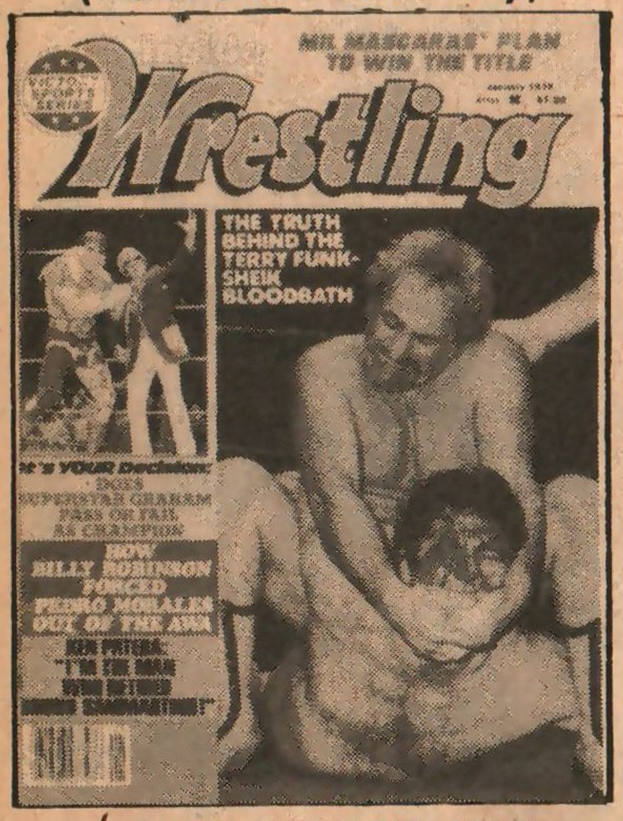

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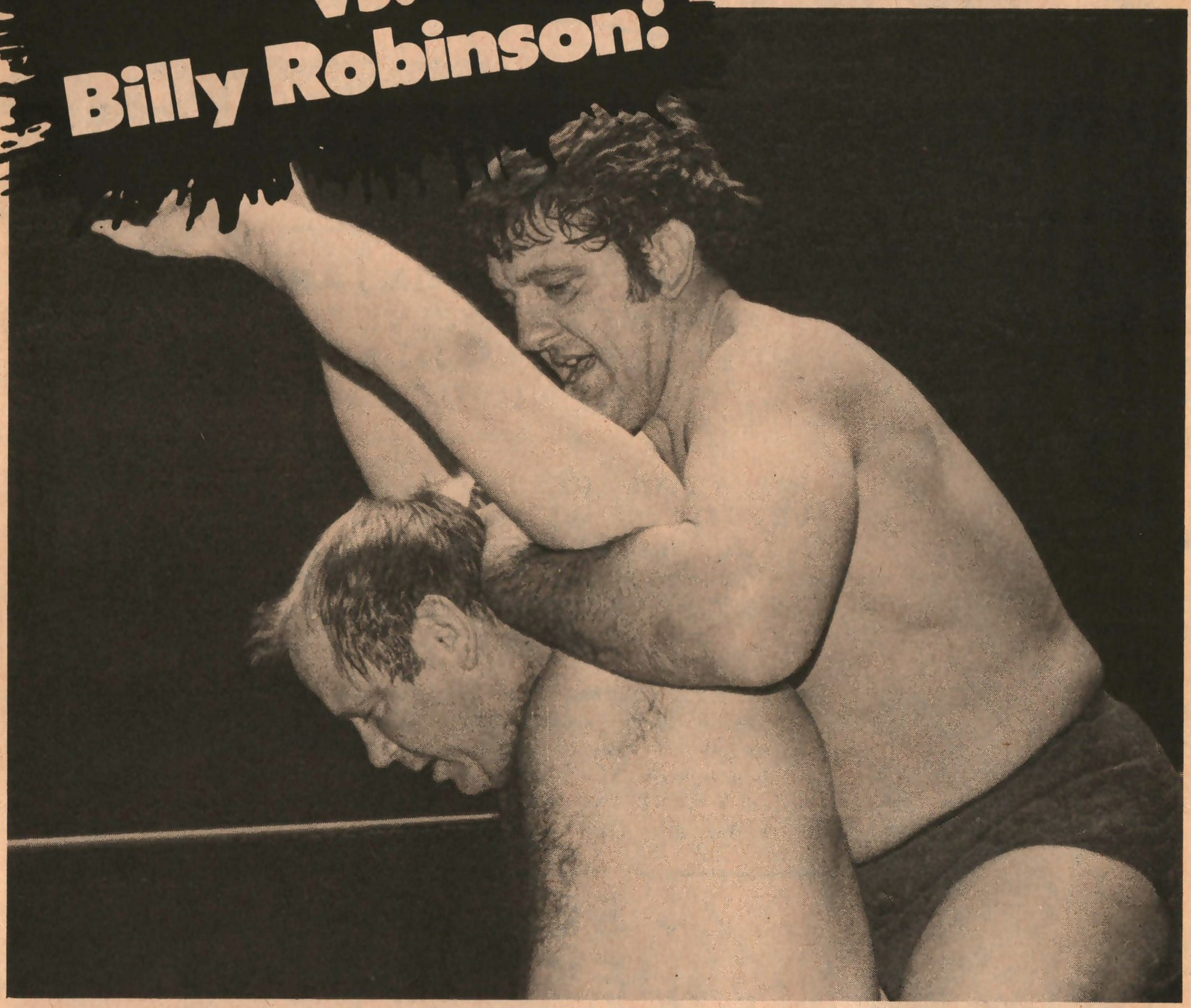
Dory Funk Jr. vs. Billy Robinson:



MIRROR IMAGE

NO DETAIL ESCAPES Billy Robinson's attention, not even the subtlest change. He is a veteran observer of the entire sport, and people often come to him to glean his opinions. Talking with Billy Robinson for

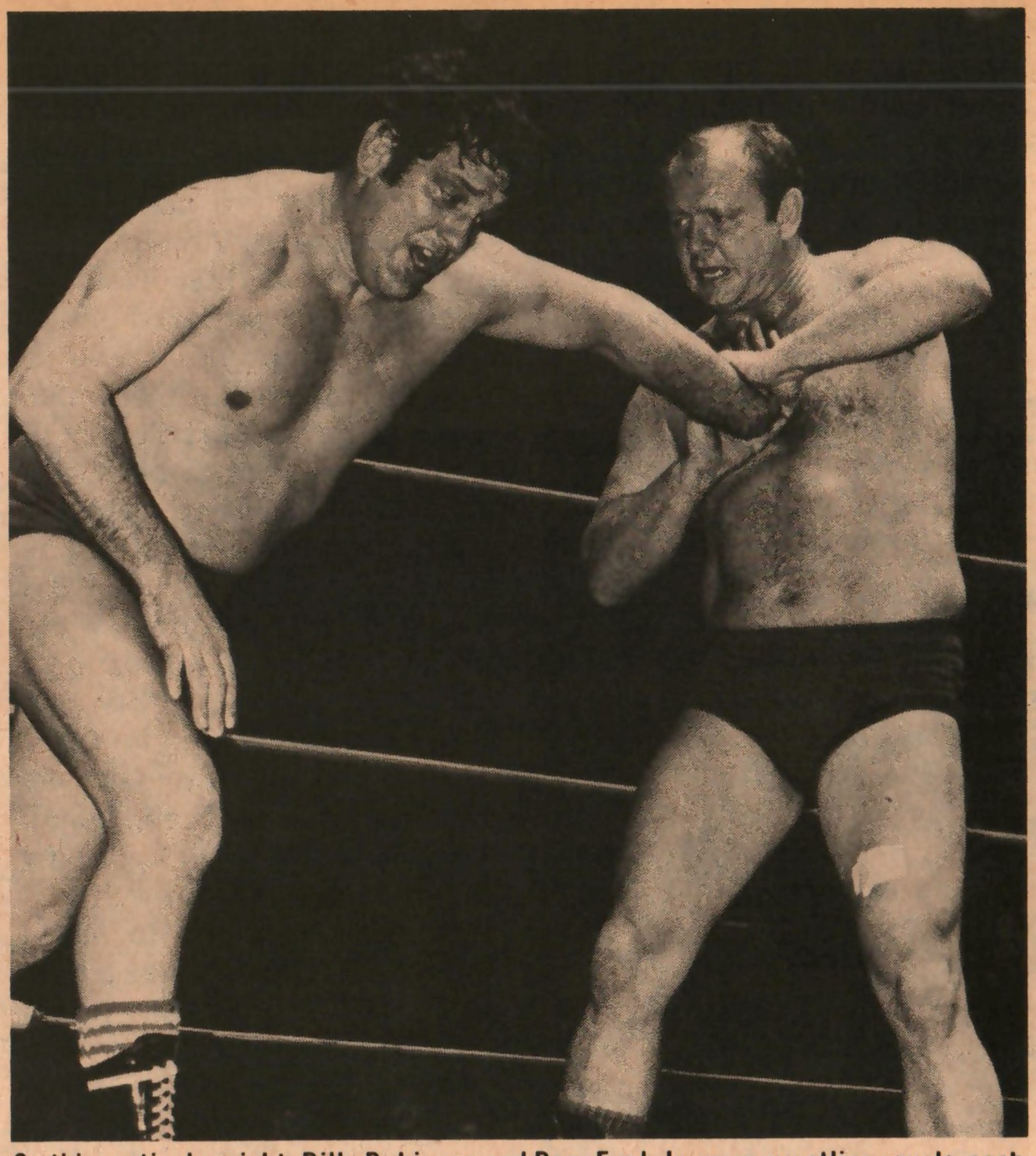
an hour is like holding a conversation with a wrestling encyclopedia. He truly knows everything that goes on. He gets a lot of his information first-hand.

"Watch Dory Funk Jr.," he said many months ago. "Something is going to happen. I can sense it."

At the time, no one was sure what to do with this piece of information. After all, Dory's career had been in partial eclipse; Terry was the more dominant member of the clan. Dory seemed to be content to spend most of his time on the family ranch, taking only an occasional match when the urge hit him. But when Robinson says to keep an eye on a man, you listen to him.

He was right.

Dory's career has suddenly been skyrocketing once again. When Terry took off some time to make the movie, "Paradise Alley," Dory filled in for him. Within a few weeks, Dory Funk Jr. was a hot property again, in demand for matches all over the country. But Billy Robinson beat everyone to the punch; he had scheduled a match against Dory already. He knew what was going to happen.



On this particular night, Billy Robinson and Dory Funk Jr. were wrestling equals, each battling in the same way. This was part of Billy's plan to learn more about Dory's style, where it succeeds and where it fails.

PHOTOS BY KEVIN KRON

Two men, both alike in skills, face each other in an exciting contest of talents. Place Dory Funk Jr. and Billy Robinson in the squared circle, and a thrilling match is bound to result. No one walked away disappointed from this match

"I really wanted to wrestle Dory Funk," noted Billy. "I have long admired his style and skills. He represents a challenge to me. Of course, I knew it would be a brutal battle of equals. But that is the kind of match I like most. Believe me, I did enjoy wrestling him."

"No one wrestles quite like Billy Robinson," confessed Dory. "He can do things in the ring no other man would dare even attempt. How did he get so good? But I'll tell you, I never felt better coming out of a match than I did when I wrestled him."

The match between these two was a battle of wrestling virtuosity. It started strictly scientific, and it remained so. Both men displayed a wide range of maneuvers.

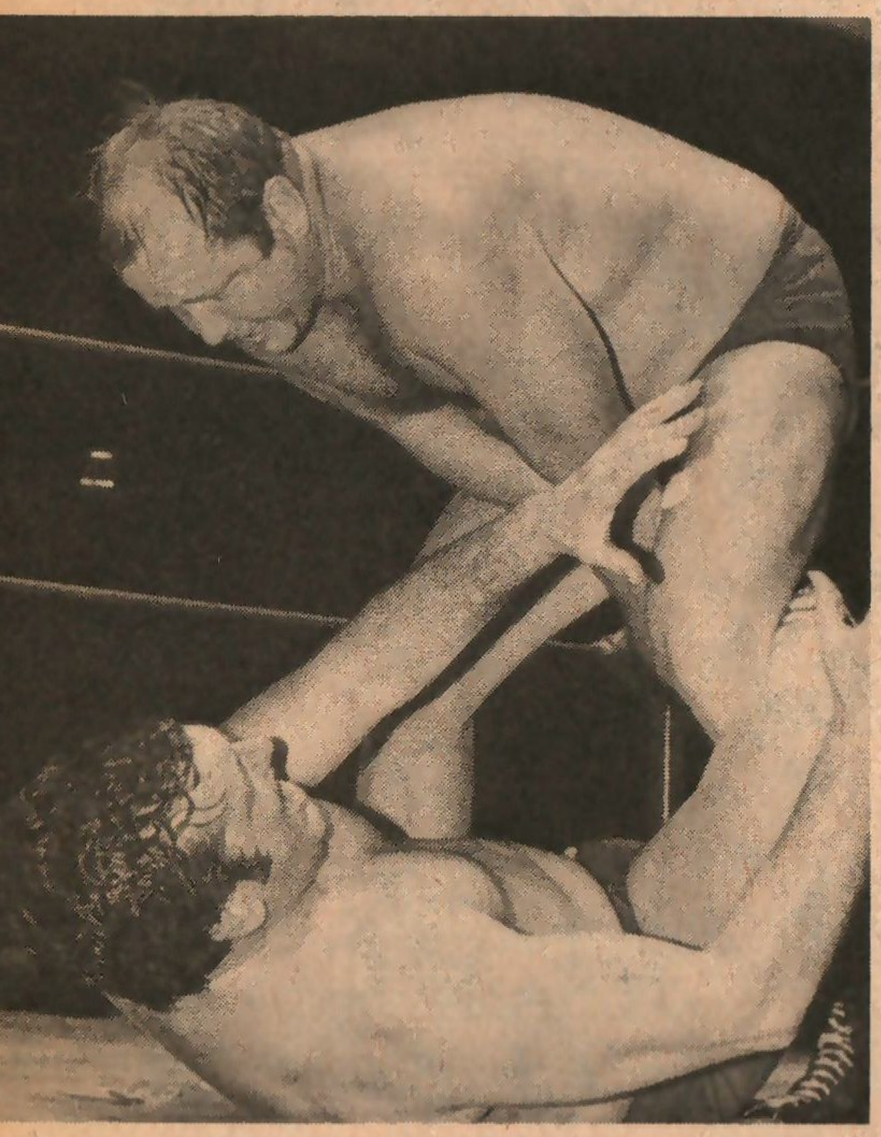
From now on, when people talk about great scientific battles, this match will be the first one they talk about.

But this was more than just a fantastic scientific match. The two men employed tactics which were almost identical. It was as if each man was a mirror image of the other. It was uncanny.

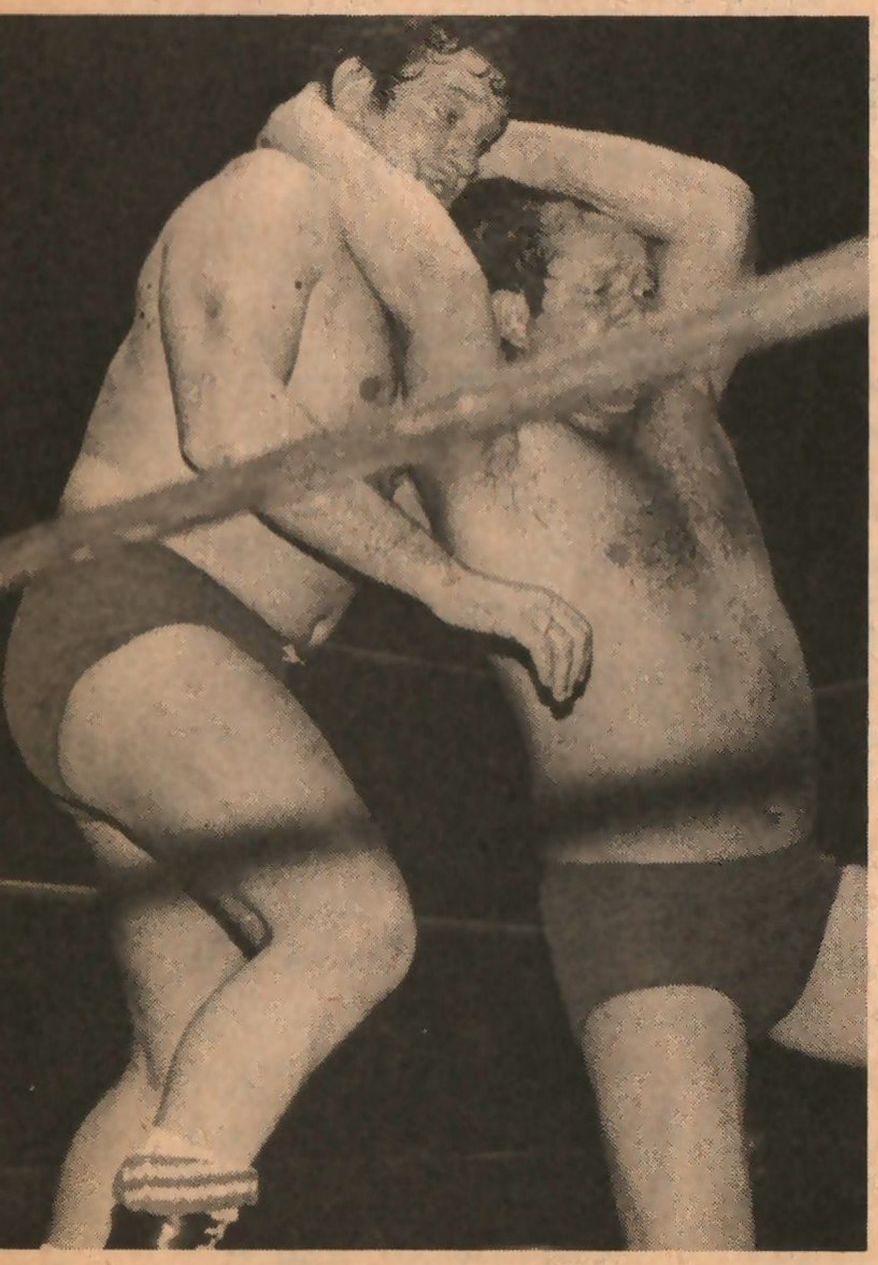
"There was a reason for that," said Robinson. "It all had to do with the fact that I have long been an admirer of Dory's style. I like many of the things he does, and I wanted to try some of his maneuvers on him. Of course, I never expected this

kind of result.

"I spent many hours studying films of Funk in action. He has a certain subtlety in style which, quite frankly, I have long envied. Very few other wrestlers have this. Therefore, I felt it might be a good idea to emulate it. I am glad I was successful in this endeavor. It provided for some interesting moments in the match."



Much of this battle proved to be quite frustrating for Dory. Every time he had Robinson in what seemed to be effective holds (above and below), Billy managed to escape—using Dory's own tactics!



Interesting moments is understating the case. This match was a thriller from the opening bell. No man ever held control for an extended period only because both men did so well. The climax of the match came when Billy used a spinning toe hold on Dory. Skillfully, Funk managed to free himself so he could try the same maneuver on Robinson. But Billy had done his homework: he knew just how to escape.

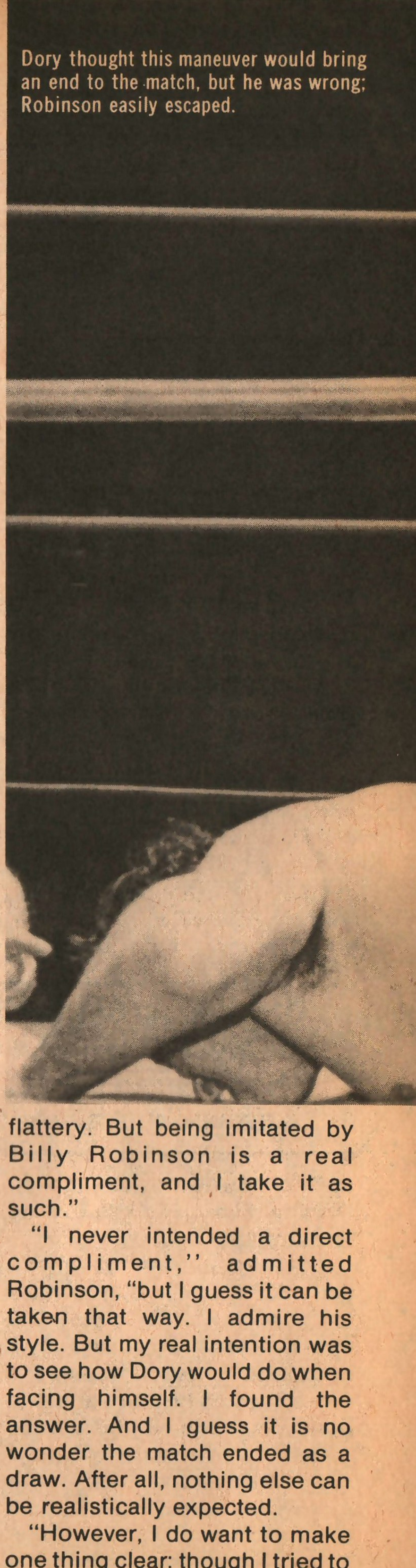
"Let me tell you," Dory said later on, "I was scared for a few moments there. I understood what Robinson had been doing. I knew he was trying to use my own moves against me. But I never expected him to use a spinning toe hold. It was a total shock. But it certainly wasn't the only shock of the evening.

"After I got myself free, I knew I had no choice but to use the same move on him. Look, I honesty thought he would never be able to escape it himself. Sure as hell shocked me when he did! He is amazing.

"Even though my schedule is getting pretty hectic again, I want a rematch against Robinson. But this time, I'll outfox him. I'll use maneuvers he's never seen before. That man knows too much.

"No other opponent I have ever wrestled understood my style so perfectly. No other man has ever gone to the lengths Robinson did in order to duplicate my moves. Hell, I don't know if I would ever do that. Billy Robinson is shrewd. No one else would have done what he did, and I respect him for it.

"But I'll tell you. A less talented wrestler would have never gotten away with it. Know what I mean? Hell, they say imitation is the sincerest form of

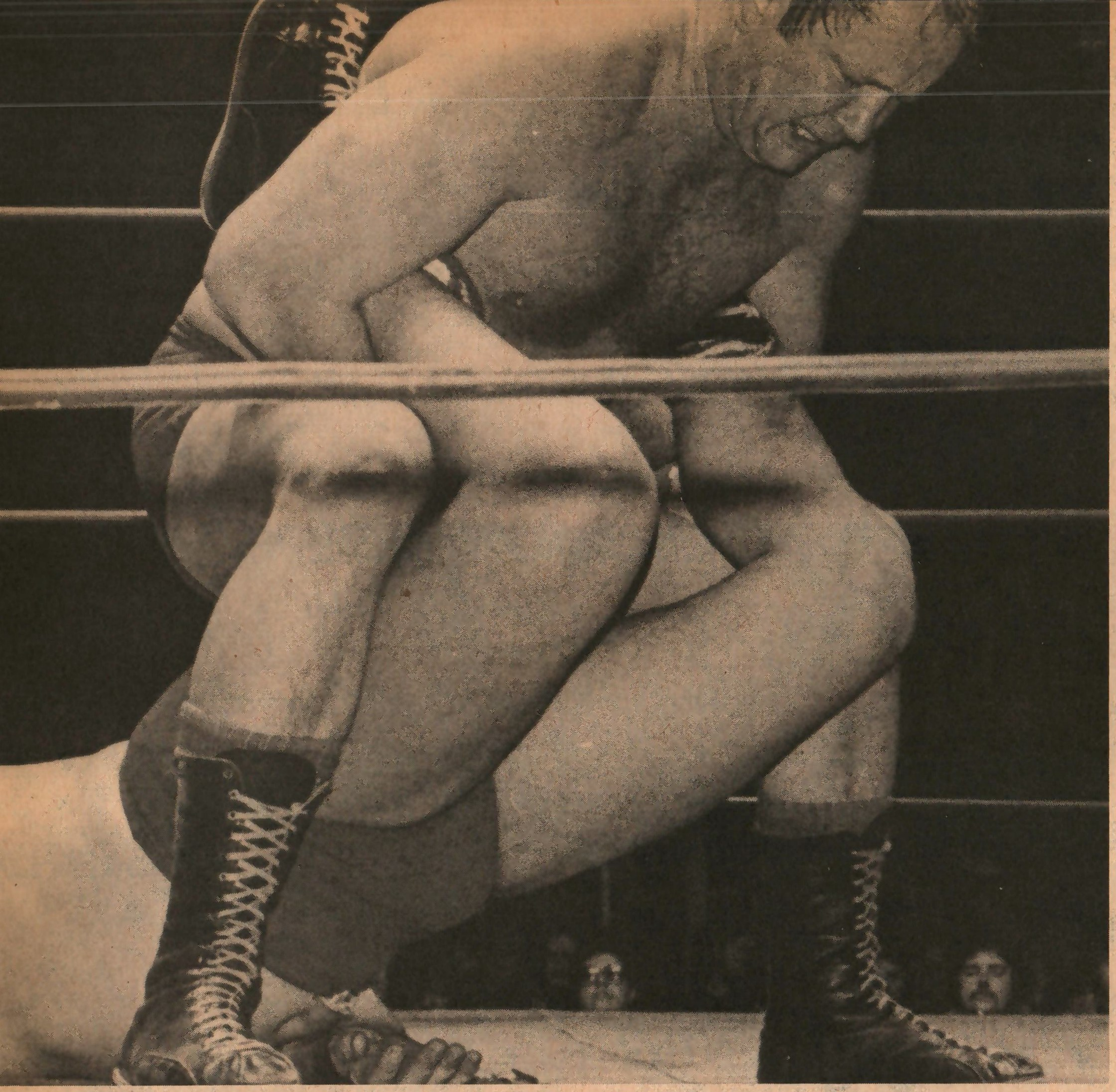


Dory thought this maneuver would bring an end to the match, but he was wrong; Robinson easily escaped.

flattery. But being imitated by Billy Robinson is a real compliment, and I take it as such."

"I never intended a direct compliment," admitted Robinson, "but I guess it can be taken that way. I admire his style. But my real intention was to see how Dory would do when facing himself. I found the answer. And I guess it is no wonder the match ended as a draw. After all, nothing else can be realistically expected.

"However, I do want to make one thing clear: though I tried to



do as Dory would do, I was not totally successful. I made some mistakes, and Funk caught them. He saw his openings and he took them. But he made mistakes too. I saw them. And though I tried as hard as I could to wrestle like him, I did have to allow my own style to come through when necessary. Yet I still was able to carry out my intentions most of the time. And that is as much as I can reasonably expect."

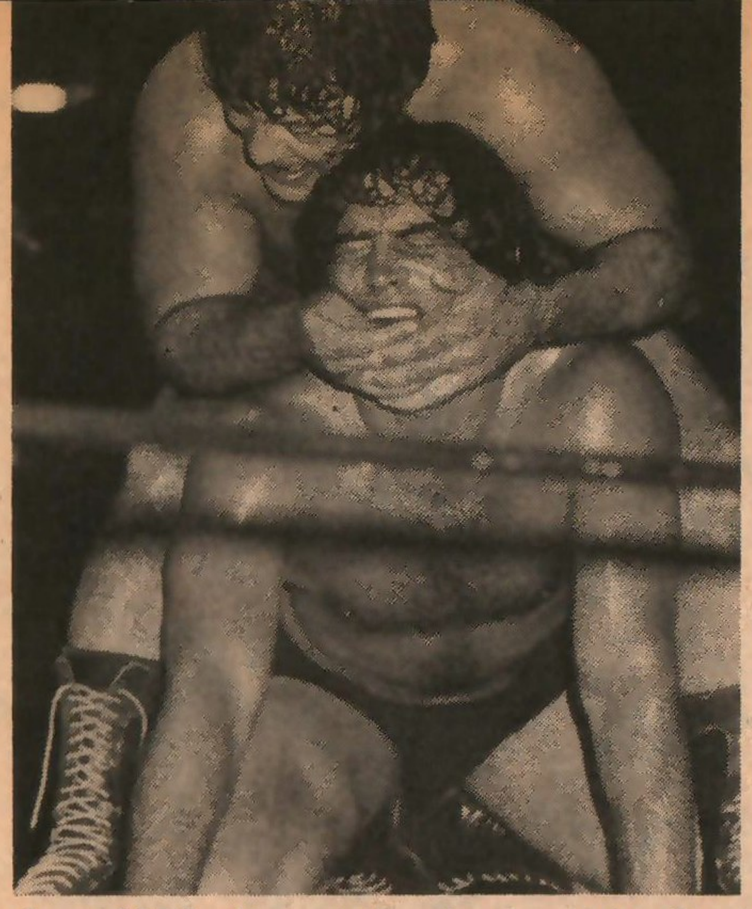
What does this all mean? To what purpose did imitating Dory Funk Jr. help Billy Robinson?

"I learned a lot from this match," said Billy. "I learned more about my own limitations and abilities. I learned not to do it again. It is one thing to try to imitate another person. It is quite a different thing to become that person.

"Dory's style is good for him, not for me. I was not comfortable being a mirror image of someone else. And though I may adapt some of his moves into my own repertoire, I will never try to be Dory Funk Jr. However, I was happy in the knowledge that I could be if I wanted to be.

"Next time I wrestle him, things will be different. I will not use his maneuvers. I will use mine. I now know how effective he is. I will file the information I've learned for future reference. Someday, what I know may be very useful; if not for me, then for someone else."

Granted, this is a rather difficult way to gain knowledge, but for Billy, the effort has paid off. It further solidifies his position as a top wrestling expert. Talk to him. Learn all about Dory Funk Jr. □



In a 1974 attempt to win the title, Paul nearly defeated Jack Brisco.

A CAREFUL EXAMINATION of the ledger of recent challengers to Harley Race's NWA crown would seem to be inclusive enough. All the top wrestlers of the federation seem to have tangled with Race. Well, almost all.

There is one prominent name which is missing from this list. It certainly can't be for any lack of ability, for Paul Jones' enormous scientific skills are well-known. And his skills have been documented in past title matches against Jack Brisco, Terry Funk and Dory Funk Jr.

So why has Paul Jones been ignored when opponents have been selected for Harley Race? Why is his name never mentioned when promoters discuss the top NWA wrestlers?

Why has Paul Jones been forgotten?

"Damned if I know," Jones exclaimed. He sat on the front porch of his spacious home, a copy of the recent wrestling rankings on his lap. He toyed with the edges of the paper, his eyes fixed upon some innocuous point just beyond the paper. Jones ran his hand over the list

PAUL JONES: THE FORG

Somewhere in the NWA championship shuffle, people forget to consider Paul Jones. While there is no question he deserves a shot at the belt, there are many questions about why he is being ignored

and cleared his throat.

"I think I've shown that I'm a top-flight wrestler. I don't feel I have to prove myself to anyone," Jones said, his burning eyes belying the gentle strands of his voice.

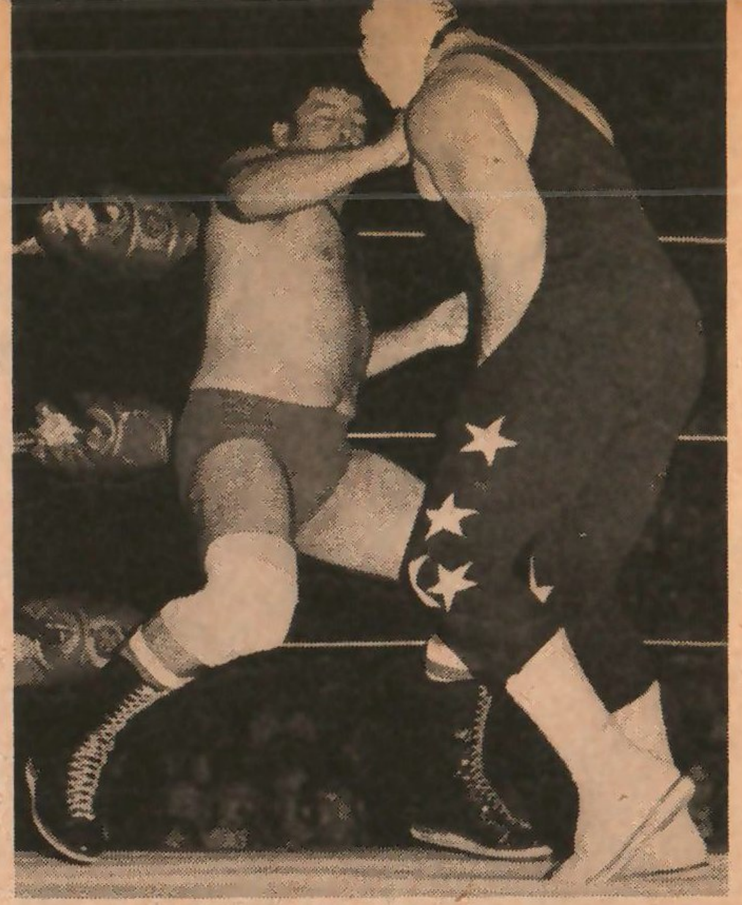
A few years ago, the matches of Paul Jones against the NWA titlists were considered true wrestling classics. It was considerd just a matter of time before Jones wore the NWA belt. Then slowly, without explanation, the title matches diminished, then stopped when Harley Race won the crown.

"I'm not saying there was any kind of conspiracy; no, nothing like that," Jones said. "I've spoken to a number of people and no one has an answer as to why. It does seem strange that when Race took the title I stopped getting those championship shots. Maybe you should ask Harley."

A splendid idea.

"Kind of figured you guys would dump this on me," Race said, turning his face away from me and studying a rather unattractive painting which

(Continued on page 50)



Paul has proven himself worthy of a shot at the title by beating Masked Superstar.

OTTEN MAN

Jones is well on his way to taking the NWA title from Terry Funk. Unfortunately, Funk found a way to cheat his way out.

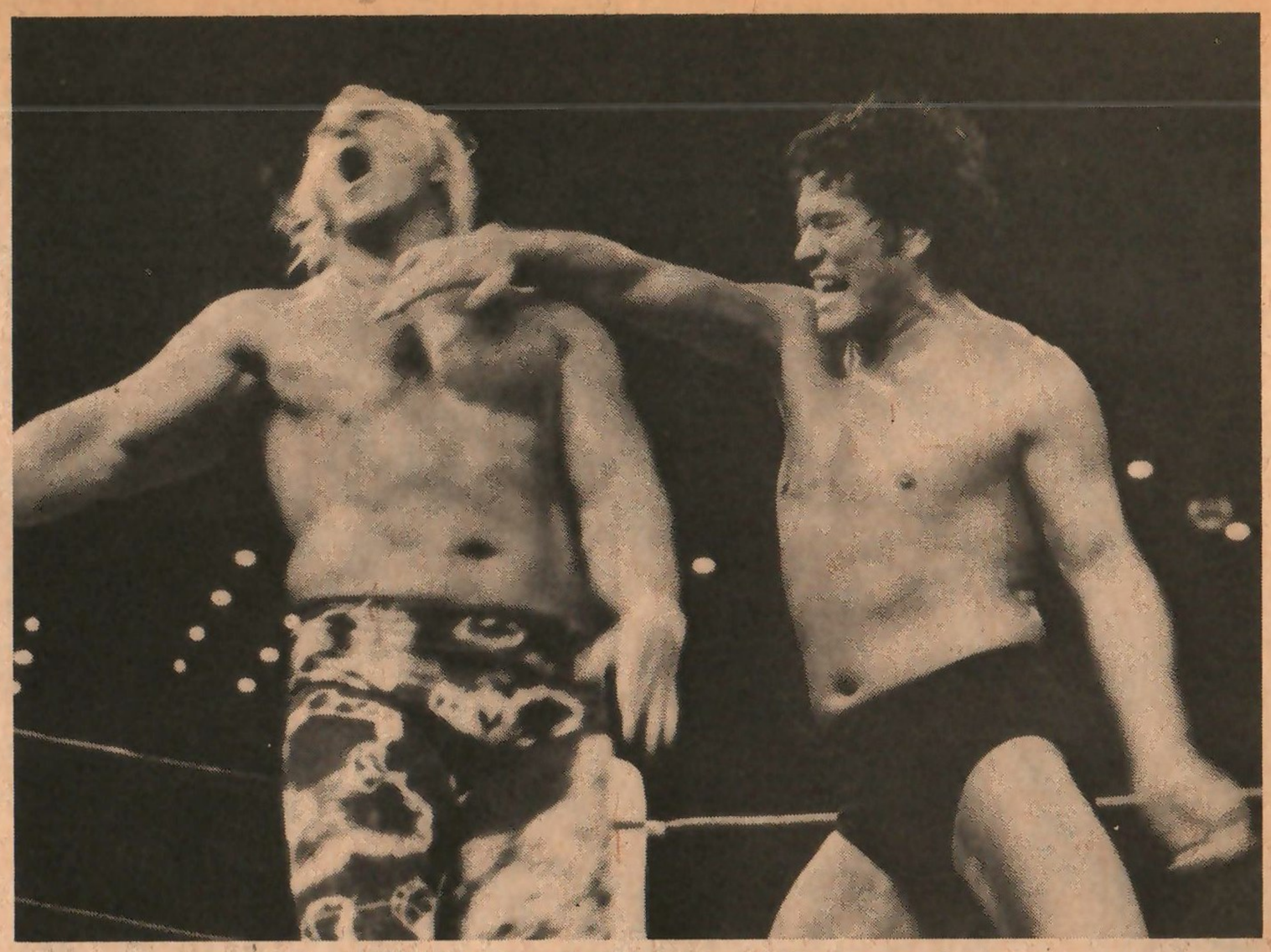
Without the WWWF belt around his waist, Superstar Billy Graham seems like a lost soul. He must now confront the future, and the future may not be very promising. What will his next move be? Where will he go?

Former Champion Superstar Graham: WHERE HE GO

THE FUTURE OF Superstar Billy Graham is filled with uncertainty. After losing his WWWF title to Bob Backlund, the ex-champion was confronted with several harsh realities.

Does he persist in regaining his crown, perhaps embarking on some futile course which will only thrust him into the shape of a pathetic has-been?

Does he appreciate the moments of glory he derived from the belt and feel content that, unlike so many other wrestlers, he dared to climb the mountain of success and was awarded with triumph?



Soon after he lost the WWWF belt to Bob Backlund, Superstar Graham went to Japan and wrestled Antonio Inoki. Is Billy destined to keep wandering all over the world now? No one but Graham knows for sure.

DOES FROM HERE?

Does he face a difficult decision, perhaps realizing that he requires a new stratagem if his future is to be as successful as his past?

Or was Superstar Billy Graham a fluke champion, truly unworthy of wearing the belt, a wrestling defect which the charitable drive of Bob Backlund's ability has finally cured?

The answers are difficult to learn from Graham. We posed them to him and received a typically arrogant, vague response.

"It'll be a short while before I, the greatest wrestler that ever lived, recaptures the belt and struts about proudly once again. One stinking night I'm a little off and people want to bury me. What garbage," he snorted.

Since Graham triples as President, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Billy Graham Fan Club, such self-serving remarks are expected. And quite useless. So, in order to delve more accurately into this important wrestling problem, we have spoken to numerous wrestling experts, wrestlers, promoters, some of whom were reluctant to have us use their names.

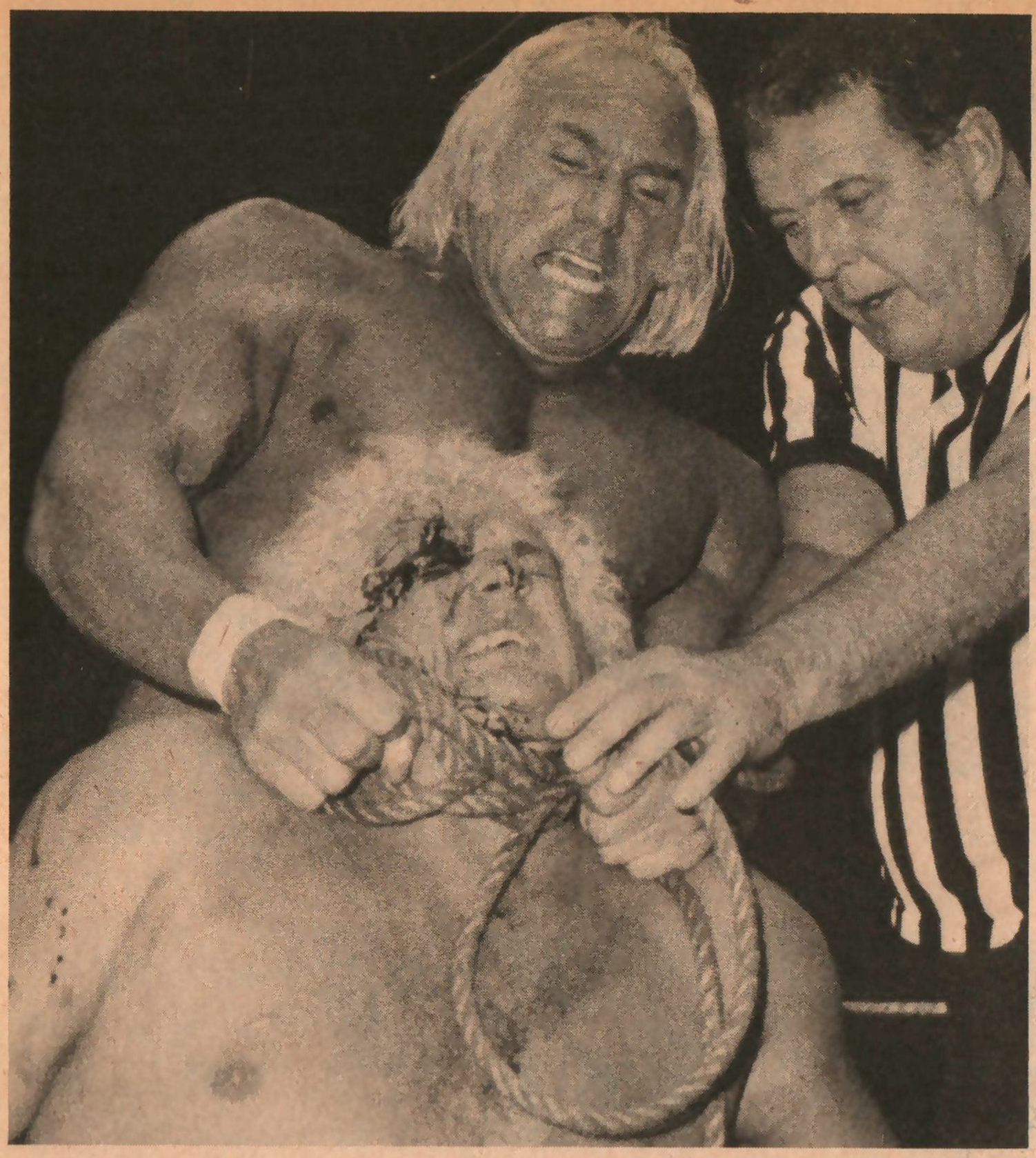
"The one thing you can't take away from Billy Graham is his talent," said Dusty Rhodes. "A lot of people hate him, me included. But he is good. The point is whether or not he is good enough. I don't think he was ever championship caliber. Backlund finally proved that. So what does he do now? That's hard to say. I've never been an ex-champion. I don't know what it's like to watch someone else wear your belt."

"These next few months will reveal a lot about Billy Graham, both to himself and to others," said former WWWF champion Bruno Sammartino. "It's a painful thing being dethroned. As much as I detest him, I have some empathy for his position.

"Graham must decide how important the belt was to him. If he's after it just for status symbolism, then he won't get it back. You have to feel like a champ and want to be a champion. Whether you're champion doesn't necessarily end with losing the title. I suspect that Graham is more interested in having people point him out as WWWF champ than in doing the belt any credit."

This is an essential element which will have perhaps the strongest bearing on his future. How much does he want it?

We suspect that Bruno Sammartino is correct. Graham showed he was totally unfit to wear the belt. Graham showed that the prestige was more important than anything else. Graham's dedication must be considered suspect. And every champion will tell you that



dedication, the thirst for the belt, is the true test of greatness.

Billy Graham doesn't want it badly enough. And his posturing must be revealed, once and for all, for what it is. Fawning self-love.

"He'd spend more time watching himself in the mirror than he would working out," said a former director of one of Graham's gymnasiums. "When he was satisfied that he looked pretty he'd stop working out and go out with the women."

Though his reasons may be wrong, or at least questionable, there is no denying that Graham enjoyed his reign as champion. Have we entered the stage where Cadillacs and blondes are equal in motivation to world-wide fame?

"I think Graham is going to get the belt back. He's a crass oaf, but he liked the life too much to let it slip away. He doesn't have to change his tactics because that got him where he was in the first place," noted a well-known Eastern wrestling writer.

"He has the native ability and he has the stomach to be vicious. I think of all the contenders, Graham is the most formidable threat to Backlund."

Graham needn't change his style. It is very effective, though quite illegal. He does have the natural talent to regain the belt.

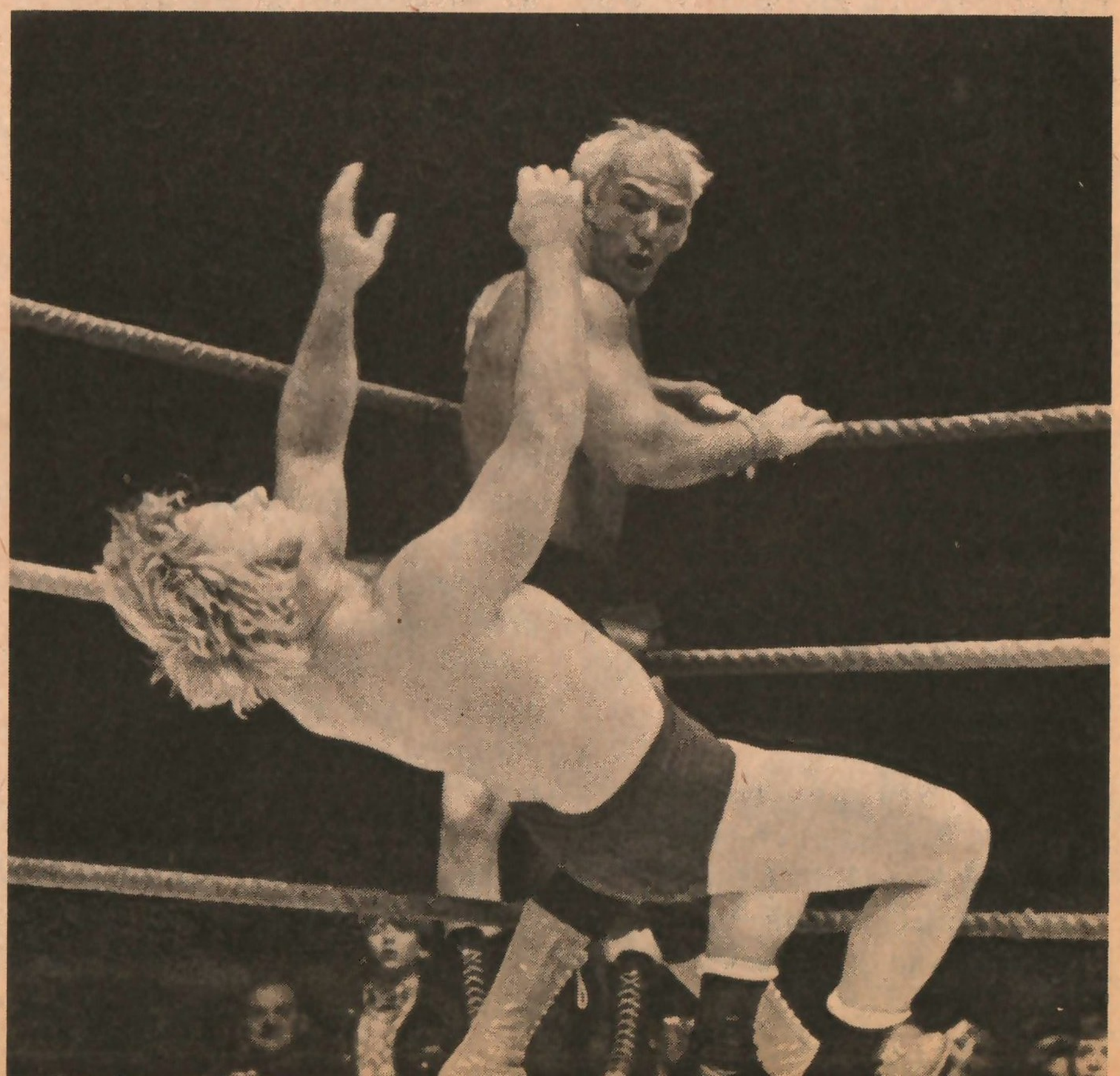
But is wrestling evolving toward a different standard for its champions? Does the win of Backlund represent a new wave of professional wrestlers who combine skill and strength *with* college background?

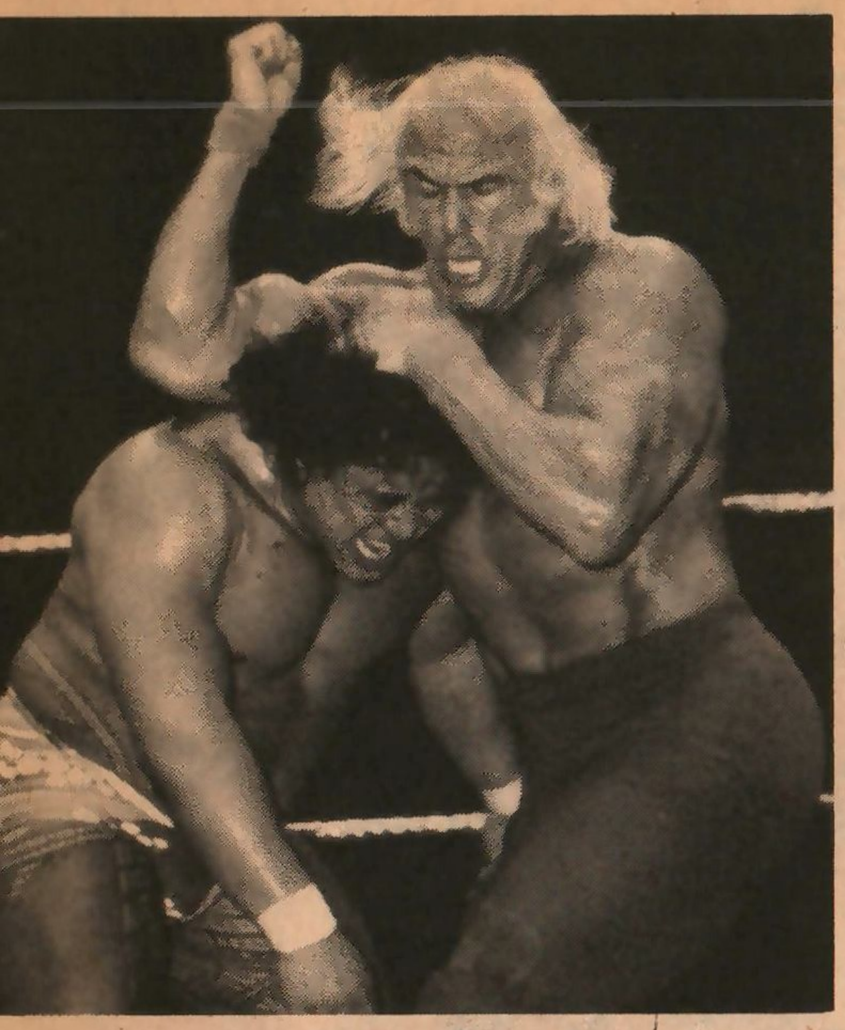
"More finesse will be required of belt-holders in the future. Championships will not be won with brute strength anymore. It's kind of sad, but I think Graham might become a dinosaur in a very short while," said Mil Mascaras.

We agree. We think that the path which Billy Graham will strut down will lead him to a repeated, fruitless quest of the WWWF belt.

He wouldn't change his tactics even if forced to at the point of a loaded gun. One doesn't suddenly

In his latest journeys, Graham has gone into battle against Dusty Rhodes (above) and Nick Bockwinkle (below).



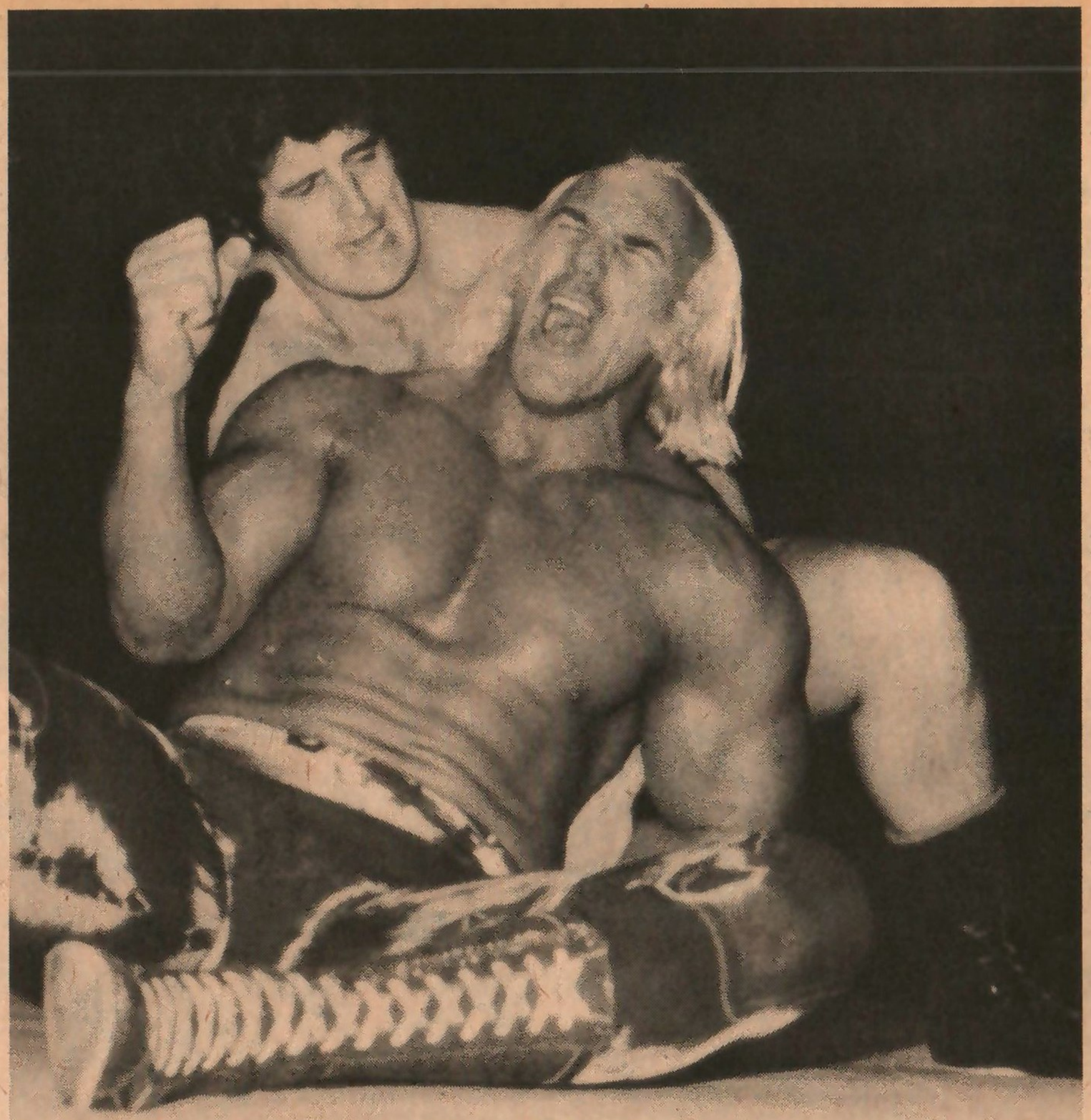


When Peter Maivia challenged him for the belt, Graham was particularly savage. But will his ruthlessness see him get the title back, or will it lead to his eventual downfall?

develop intelligence, so that avenue is out for him.

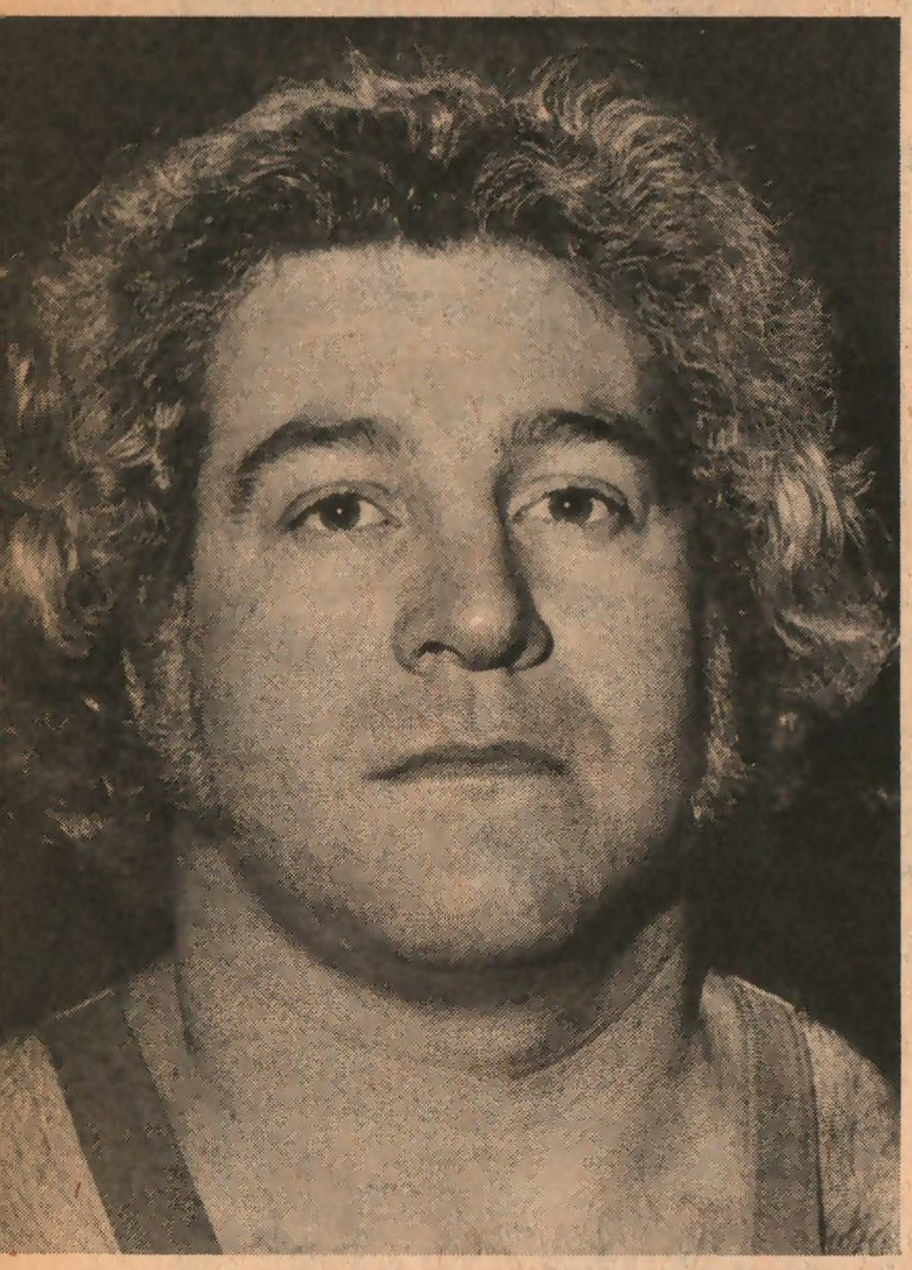
And civility. Harley Race owns the NWA belt and he is far from dignified. Yet even Race has limitations. Graham doesn't.

Champion Billy Graham was an abnormality. Try as he will, he will never be champion again. □



Above: A cowardly disqualification enabled Graham to retain his title when he battled Tony Garea, who seemed to be well on the way to winning the belt. Below: Graham's cunning allowed him to wrest the WWWF belt from Sammartino. Will he be able to duplicate his actions against Bob Backlund?

READ THIS STORY AND YOU'LL NEVER HATE KEN PATE



IT ALL STARTED three years ago. At the time, no one expected that things would turn out as they did. It all seemed quite innocent; an interested party simply helping out a troubled teenager so he could get on with the business of living. But nothing is simple. Nothing is innocent.

And nothing comes easy in this life. Not even generous acts.

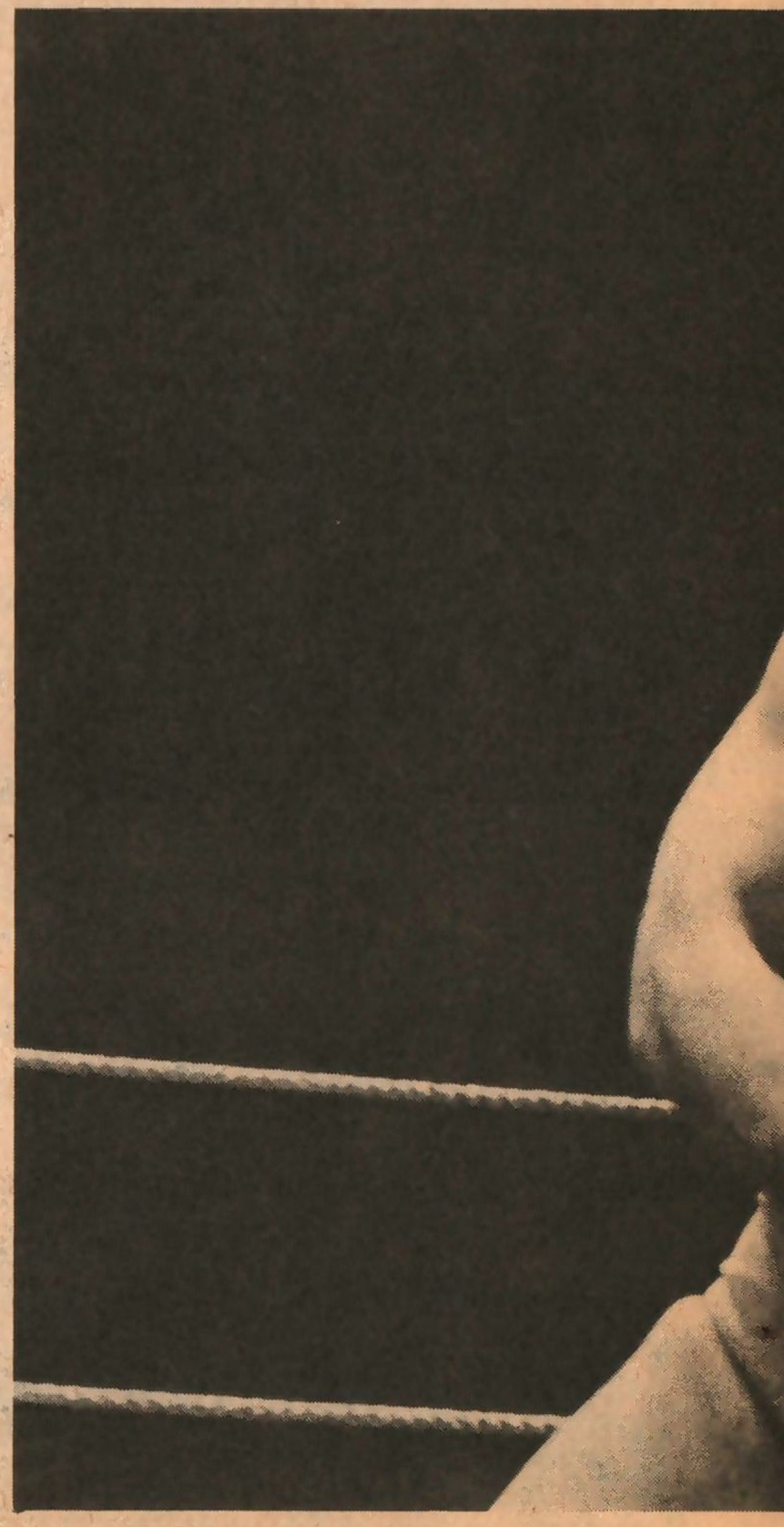
At the time, Ken Patera was just another rookie wrestler in the Mid-Atlantic region. He had earned a degree of fame, but not much. He was going nowhere in his career, but that is another story. This is about Tadd Martey, and the friendship he has with Ken Patera.

Tadd had no ambitions to be an athlete. He just wanted to protect himself from four of his schoolmates. He was their favorite target, the one who was constantly the object of their adsolescent anger. They mocked him, taunted him, dared him, then ganged up on him. He never stood a chance. He wanted to change all that.

It was just another gym, but to Tadd it represented a glimmer of hope. He just wanted to build himself up. He just wanted to be able to defend himself against his tormentors, the cruel gang of four. But there was a catch: the gym wanted money for Tadd to train there. Tadd had none. He lived with his mother, a broken-down alcholic shrew who would occasionally beat him. There was no money in the house save the pennies the welfare provided. Tadd lived in fear of his home, of his school, of his life.

Without money, Tadd was not allowed the chance to train. However, the gym owner did allow him to sit and watch, possibly picking up a few hints from other people. It was an act of pity.

Ken Patera happened into this particular gym one day. He was in the city for a wrestling show, and he wanted to get in a few hours of training. At the time, he was still a



Even rulebreakers get the blues, and Ken Patera is no exception. This touching story will make his detractors realize that Ken is only human, subject to the same frailties as anyone else

RA AGAIN

fan favorite. As he was working out, he saw a teenager intensely watching his every move. It was Tadd, admiring the work Ken was doing. Indeed, the young man was awed.

Patera was curious. Why did Tadd just sit there, staring, not saying a word? Ken approached him, trying to engage Tadd in conversation. The shy teenager was reluctant to talk at first, but Patera was reassuring. He asked to be trusted. And with a little prodding, he was.

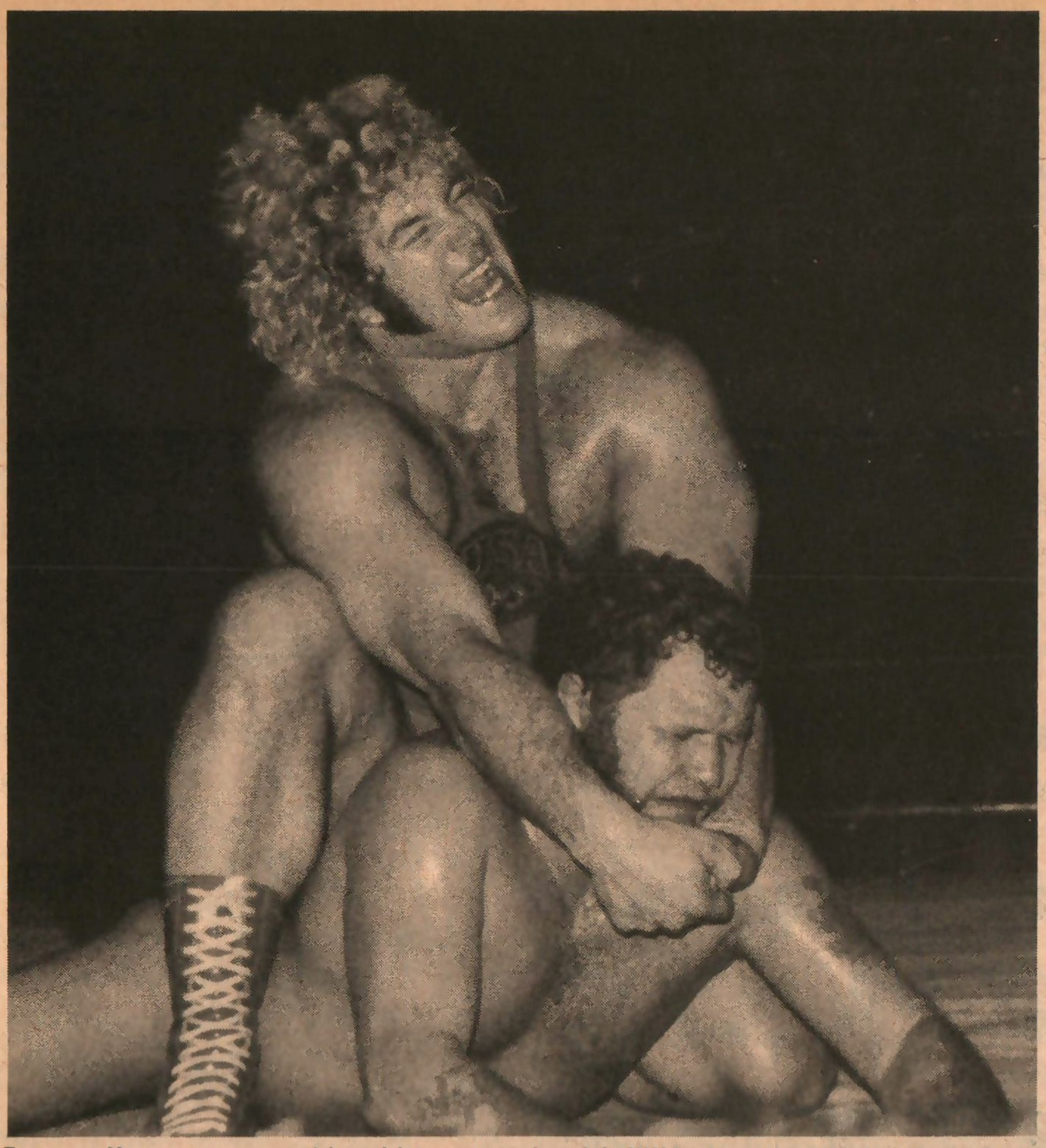
Tadd Martey's whole sad story came out. He told Patera of the beatings from his schoolmates and his mother, of the poverty, of his loneliness and his sorrow. Ken was stunned. As successful as Ken's life had been, Tadd Martey's life had been miserable. The wrestler took pity on the boy. But pity alone could not help Tadd, and Ken knew it.

Over the next few weeks, Patera and Tadd developed their friendship. The first thing Ken did was pay for the boy to start training sessions at the gym. He met with Mrs. Martey and tried to also straighten her out. At first, she wouldn't listen. But she soon gave in. Ken helped find her a job. He tried to get her off the booze.

If this was the best of all possible worlds, this story would end here. But this is not the best of all worlds. Things change. Patera changed. He moved to the WWWF. He became a rule-breaker. But the relationship between Ken and the Marteys did not change. Tadd still looked up to Patera as an idol, a friend, a mentor who had been the most positive force to ever walk into his life. The mother stopped drinking. Ken still made occasional visits to the Marteys, encouraging them, helping them, giving them moral support. Tadd and his mother even started getting along with each other.

In school, Tadd would boast of his close relationship with the wrestler. But this backfired on him. It backfired badly on him.

For one young man, Ken's viciousness against men like Tony Garea (above) or Bruno (left), meant little. He knew Patera to be a generous man at heart.



Even as Ken was engaged in a bitter struggle with NWA champion Harley Race, Tadd Martey was fighting for his life. The young man's defense of the hated rulebreaker proved to be too costly for all concerned.

Because of what was happening in the WWWF, it became increasingly difficult for Tadd to defend Ken's actions. His schoolmates continued to treat him with derision, and now for added reason. Every time they heard a story about Ken crippling another opponent, they would taunt Tadd. But the young man still had faith in his friend. He continued to defend Ken.

It had to happen. It was inevitable.

As he was walking home from school one day, Tadd was jumped by four schoolmates. "This is for your friend Ken Patera," they screamed at him. They beat him senseless. They left him on the street, bleeding, broken, battered. The police rushed him to the hospital.

Ken hurried down to Virginia when he heard what had happened. By the time he reached the hospital, Tadd was just coming out of surgery. The boy's mother was drunk. She cursed at Patera. "Look what you've done to him," she cried. "Damn this world! Damn you! I hope you burn in hell!" She collapsed in his arms, drunk, tired, sobbing.

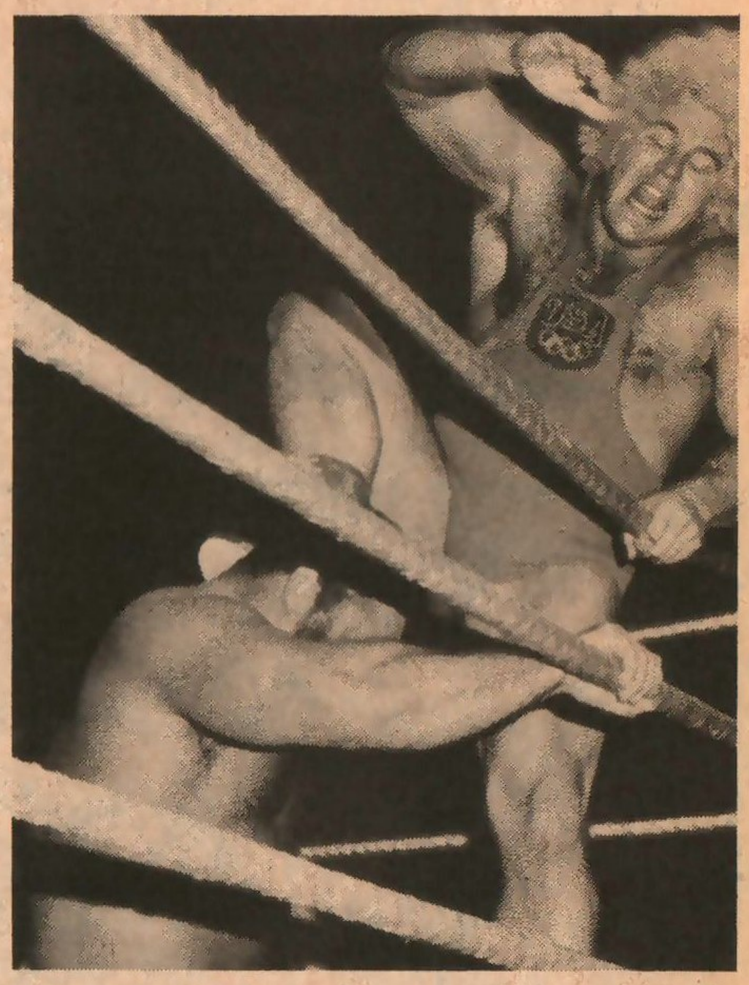
The next day, Ken was allowed to visit the boy. It was the most depressing scene of his entire life. There lay Tadd Martey on the hospital bed. Tubes were running out of his nose and mouth. Another tube was running from his arm, feeding him with vital plasma. Electrodes were attached to the sides of his head. Every heartbeat, every breath he took, every brainwave was being monitored on a machine near his bed. He was barely conscious. Ken could hardly hold back the tears upon seeing the sight. Yet Tadd's eyes brightened when he saw the wrestler.

Ken tried to force a smile. It was difficult. Then he said, "I'm sorry this had to happen to you, Tadd. I never meant for you to take this kind of pain. Please forgive me. It's all my fault.

"No, Ken," replied the boy, "it's not your fault. I don't blame you for what happened."

Patera turned away, preparing to leave. Then Tadd called out, "Ken when I grow up, I want to be like you."

Ken wept.



Ivan Putski falls victim to another of Ken's vicious moves. All wrestling fans should know there is a kind side to Ken.

Tadd recovered slowly. Only his will to survive saw him through the crisis. Ken visited the boy as often as possible, cancelling several matches in order to be in Virginia. Even now, there are still some scars, both physical and psychological, left on Tadd.

It is a joyous occasion whenever Ken visits the Marteys. He still helps them. But he still feels guilty for what happened to Tadd. There are some wounds which never heal, no matter what kind of medicine is administered. Guilt lasts forever. □

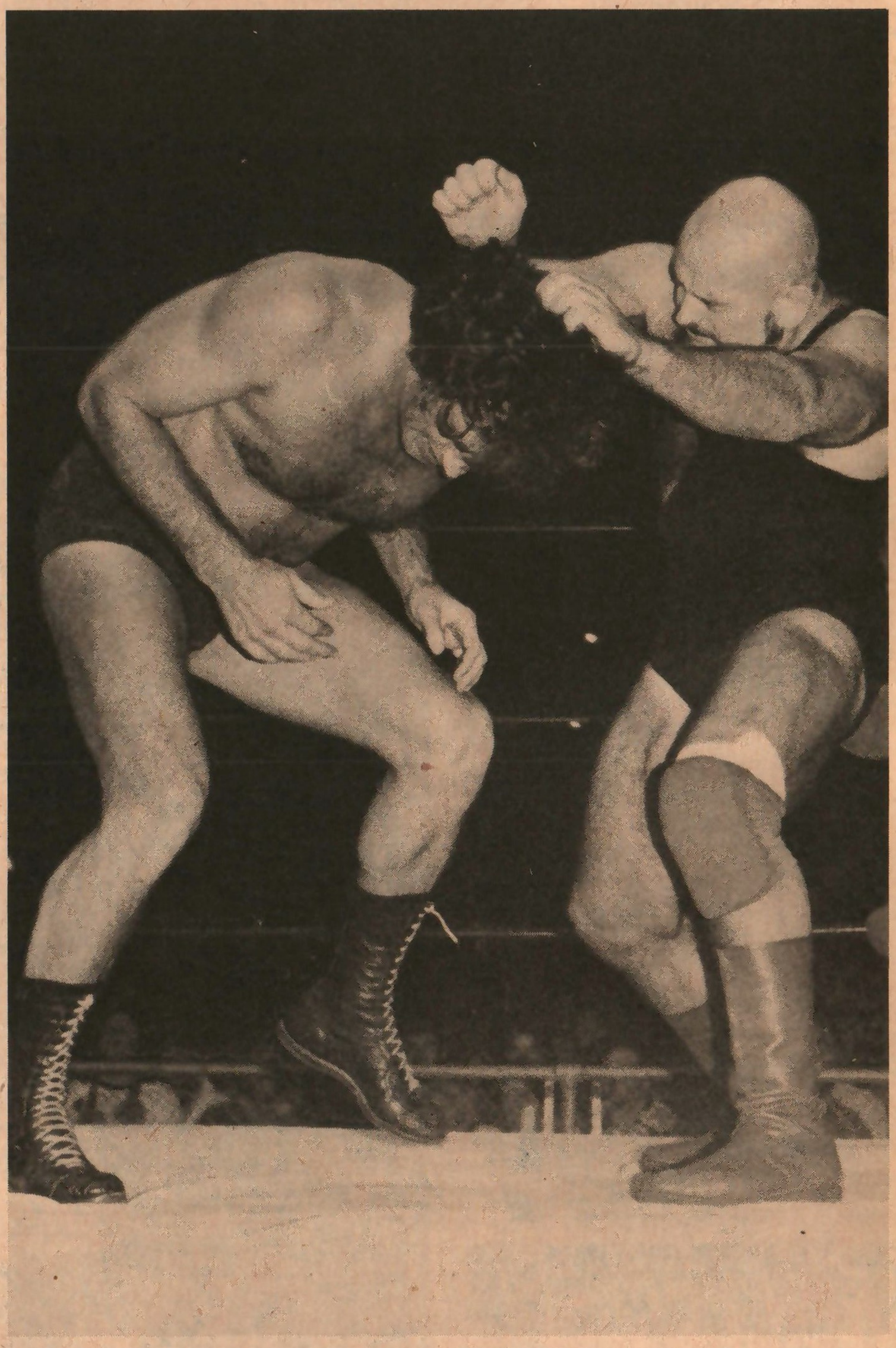
The highest praise any rulebreaker can receive is to be lauded by a scientific wrestler like Jack Brisco. Ivan Koloff is such a man to receive this kind of honor. Of course, there is a mighty good reason!

WHEN IN THE course of human events, a man can recognize his enemy's greatness despite his faults, that man deserves our respect, and his enemy deserves our attention. All considerations must be set aside, and we must give due praise to the man who has earned it.

Ivan Koloff is a rulebreaker. A vicious, cruel, wicked rulebreaker. A man who enjoys watching his opponents writhe in agony. And he's tough. In fact, he's the toughest there is. Ask any man who has wrestled him. Ask Jack Brisco.

"I would be less than honest if I didn't admit that what I have to say hurts me greatly," Jack confessed. "After all, there will never come a time when I will

(Continued on page 54)



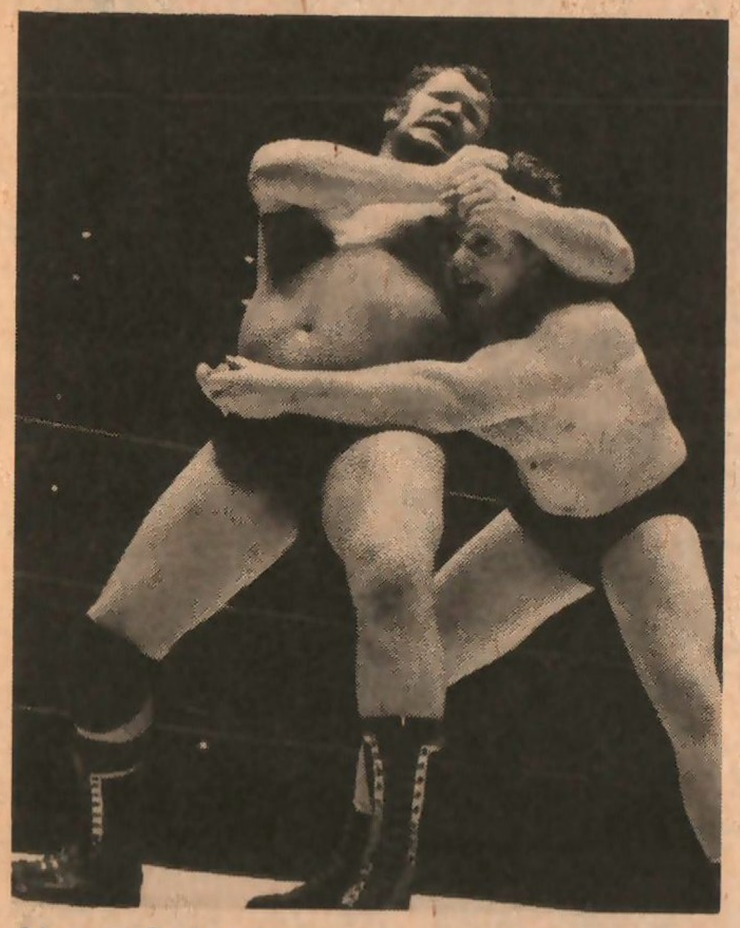
Even Jack Brisco Admits:

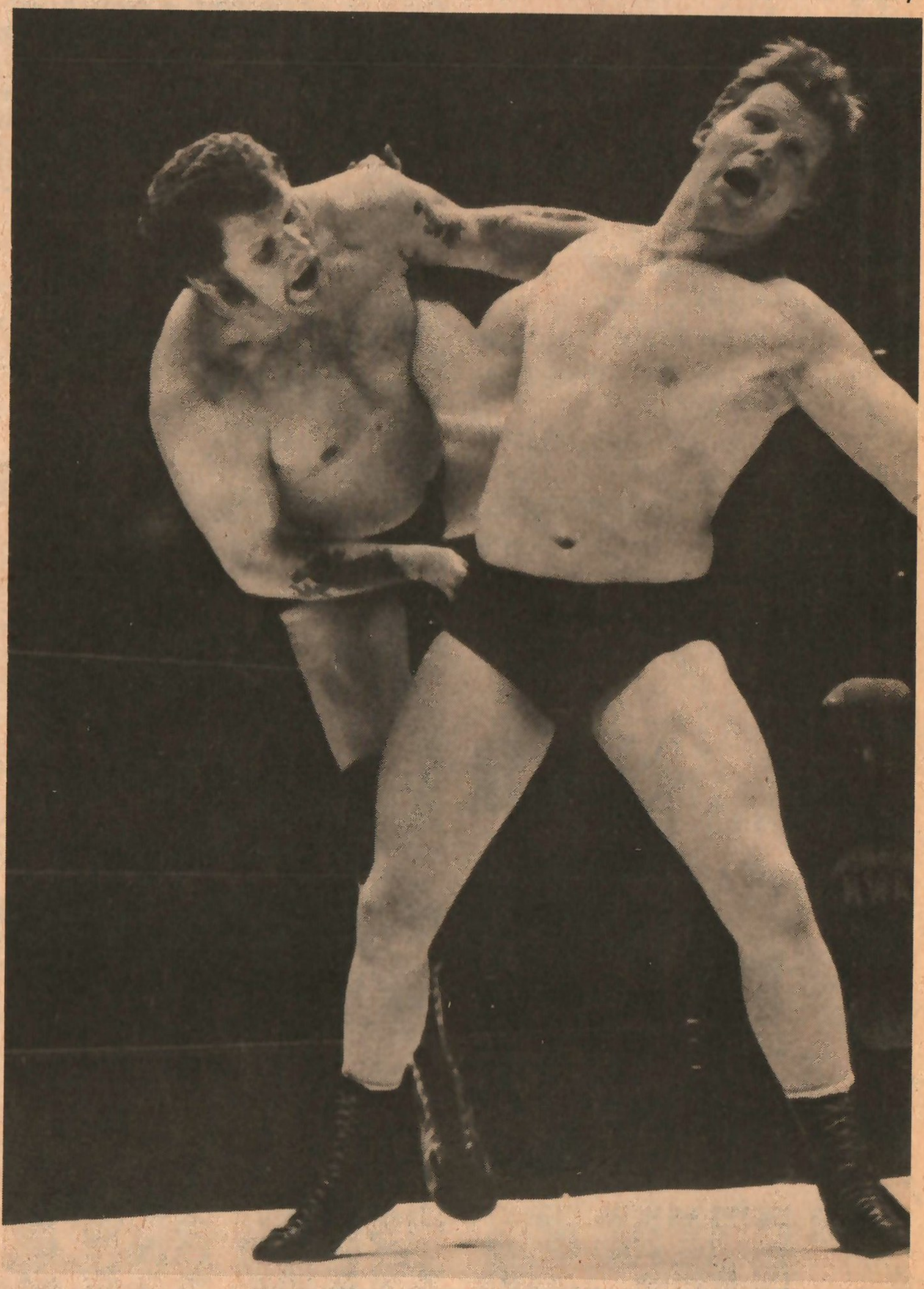
"IVAN KOLOFF IS THE TOUGHEST THERE IS!"

Bob Backlund's First WWWF Title Defense:

THEY. THAT MYSTERIOUS, all-encompassing word which hints at nocturnal ritualistic meetings. THEY. It suggests intrigue, duplicity, some evil menace. THEY. It indicates decisions made for someone, decisions which effect an individual's life, decisions that a person has no control over.

THEY. The people who forced Bob Backlund to wrestle Harley





Above: Bob tries to maneuver Race into position so he can use his spinecrusher on the NWA champion. Right: With all his strength, Backlund hurls Harley into the ropes on the opposite side of the ring. Backlund's first title defense proved to be very exciting.

"THEY FORCED ME TO WRESTLE HA

Race. Against Backlund's will. As part of a prior commitment made by Superstar Billy Graham.

"I believe in being my brother's keeper. But I'm not going to keep anything for Graham," Backlund cried heatedly.

The binding contract signed in November forced Backlund to wrestle Harley.

"I wasn't excited about it, either," said Race.

With so much reluctance, one would assume this match would have produced scores of yawns from the spectators. Not so. Not when two individuals with the pride of Bob Backlund and Harley Race meet. But we must first trace the origins of this match all the way back to the contract sighing.

It took place in a prestigious law office on Manhatten's West Side. Since our contracts are in every sector of wrestling, we had a source who hesitantly disclosed what went on that afternoon.

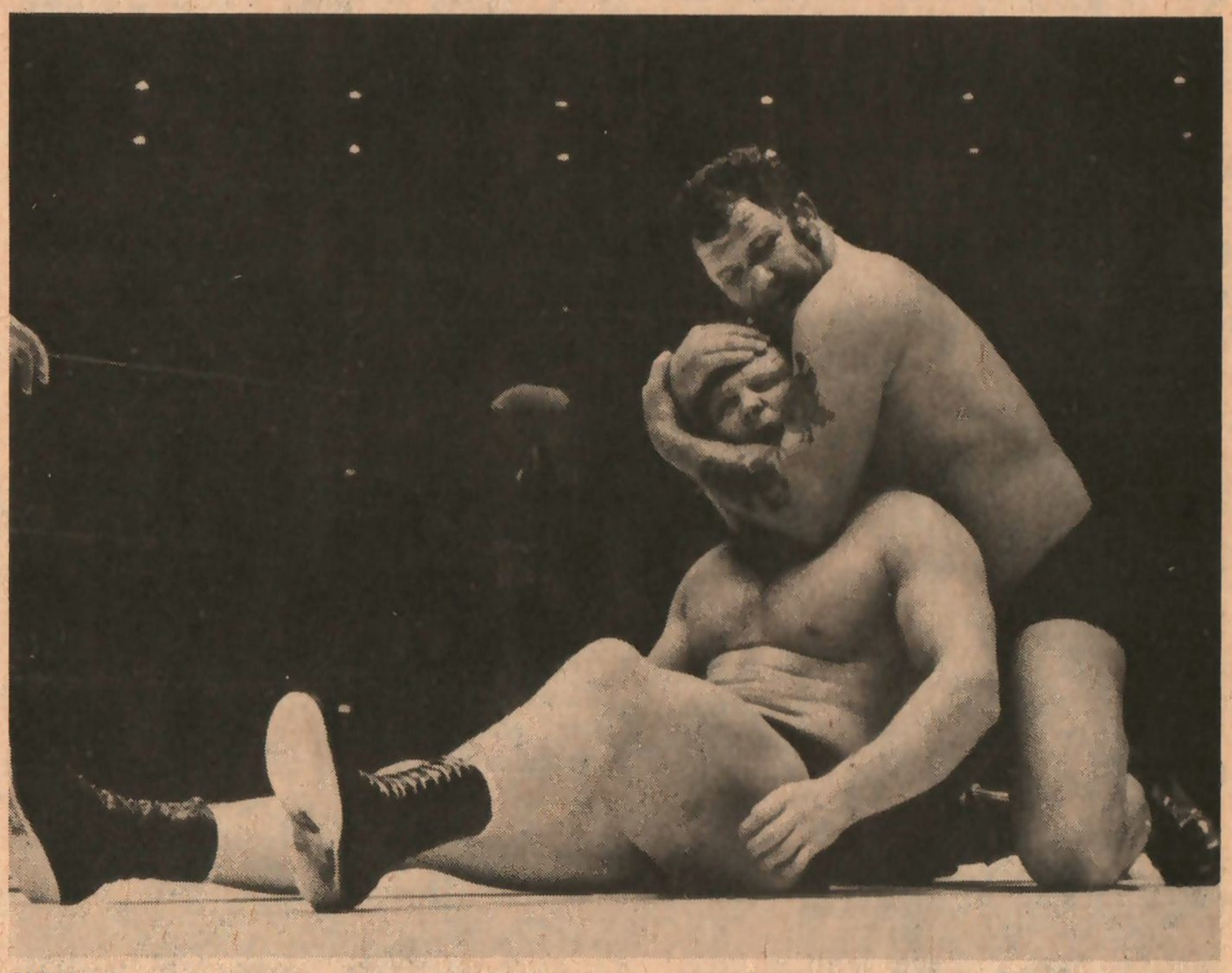
"Graham started boasting about how he was going to wipe the floor with Race right after he whipped Backlund," our source said. "Someone in the office suggested that there could be problems if Backlund beat Superstar. Graham went into a tirade at that and swore that he would never lose the belt to someone like Backlund. So that possibility was never really discussed."

Ah, the best laid plans . . . Mr. Graham fell to Mr. Backlund in Madison Square Garden, setting off all sorts of legal complications.

What threw the negotiations into chaos was the ambiguous wording of the contract. It specified that "Superstar Billy Graham, WWWF champion, shall meet Harley Race, NWA champion . . ."

Backlund's legal counsel insisted that the contract specified that Graham was to wrestle Race. Promoters countered by noting that Graham was mentioned simply because he was champ, and that the purpose of the contract was for the WWWF champion, regardless of who he was, to meet the NWA champion. They said that had Race lost, his successor would also have been bound by the terms of the agreement.

A civil court judge was asked to rule on the contract. His decision, which both sides had agreed beforehand would be binding, said that Backlund, as

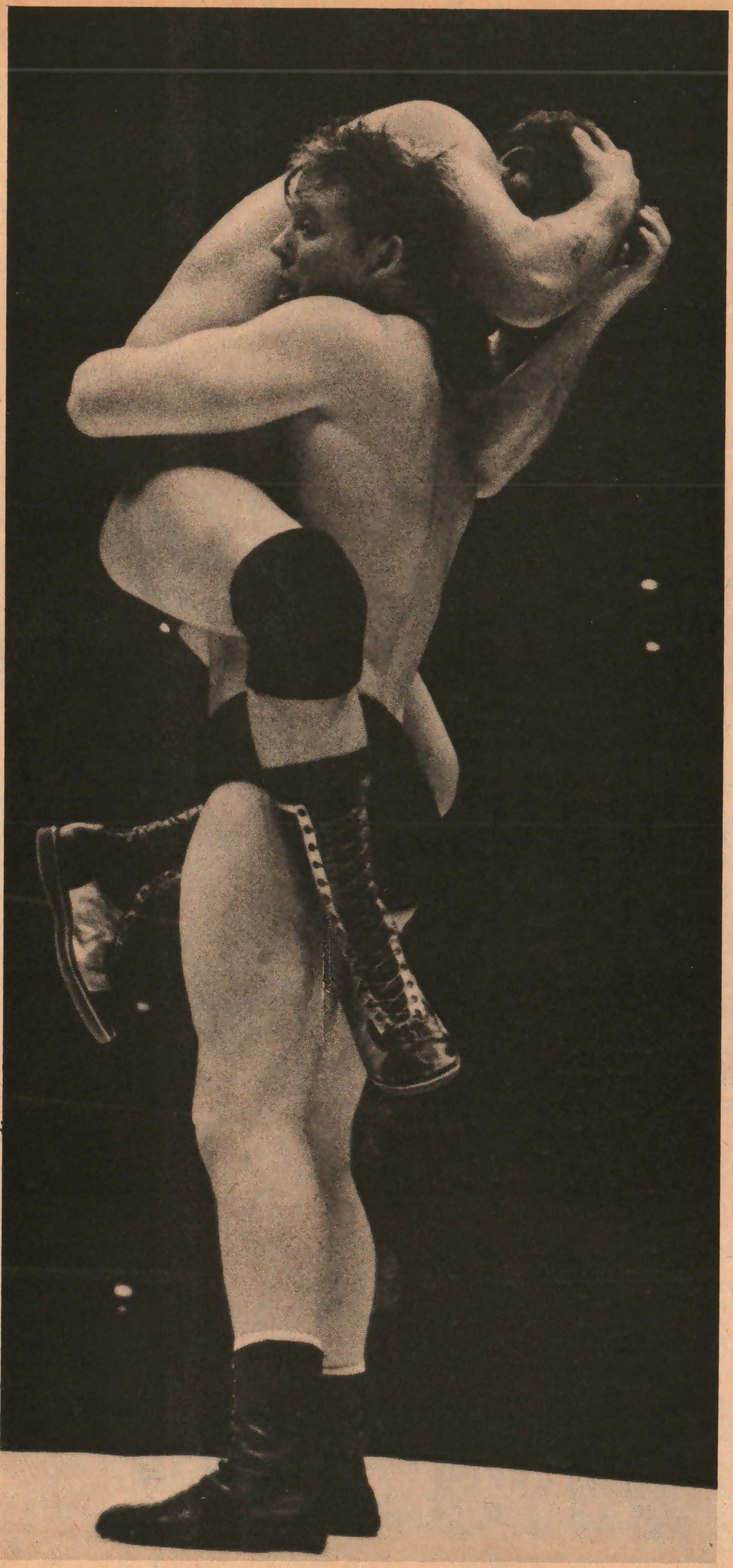


NWA champion Harley Race uses a sleeper hold on Backlund, but the move will prove to be ineffective. Bob quickly escaped from Race's clutches.

His championship only a few days old, Bob Backlund was forced to put his WWWF title on the line against NWA champion Harley Race. This certainly was not Bob's idea of a first defense. But in this match, Backlund proved his winning the belt was not a fluke!

RLEY RACE!"

PHOTOS BY JERRY PRATER



Harley fears what may happen next when Bob lifts him high in the air.

WWWF belt-holder, was legally obligated to wrestle the NWA titlist.

"They forced me to wrestle Harley Race," Backlund declared. "Maybe another wrestler would violate the court's decision, but I'm not like that. But I do want such things clarified in the future so there won't be cases like a wrestler having to fight other guy's battles.

"I won the belt from Graham and the reign of Bob Backlund has begun. It's frustrating having to contend with his lingering presence.

"This totally disrupted my schedule," said Backlund. "We had planned out a series of matches that were prepared with great delicacy and for maximum exposure. I wanted to show off my belt by taking on everyone. But I wanted to decide on it, not Billy Graham."

By the time the day of the match arrived, tempers had simmered, though steam still came from Bob Backlund as he prepared for battle in his dressing room.

"Sure, I'm still ticked off. But what can I do about it? I have my principles and I must abide by them," Backlund said. "Anyway, I'm a pro and I'm going to vent my rage on Harley Race's skull."

A capacity crowd jammed the Jacksonville, Florida, arena in anticipation of this match.

Both men vented their frustration on the other's face. Typically, Race threatened Backlund with a wide range of crude rulebreaking tricks. Characteristically, Backlund responded with skill as he twisted out of Race's brutal holds.

"On some level, I guess I resented Race," admitted Backlund.

That resentment was displayed in a devastating atomic spinebreaker on Harley in the first fall. Surprisingly, Harley didn't collapse; he managed to get to his feet and entangle the WWWF champion in a tough head-lock.

"There was something insulting about the way Backlund tried to get out of this match. I think I wanted him to regret that he couldn't find a loophole," said Harley.

The match went to a one-hour draw, a fitting conclusion for this meeting of two titans. But Race found another suitable end to the match.

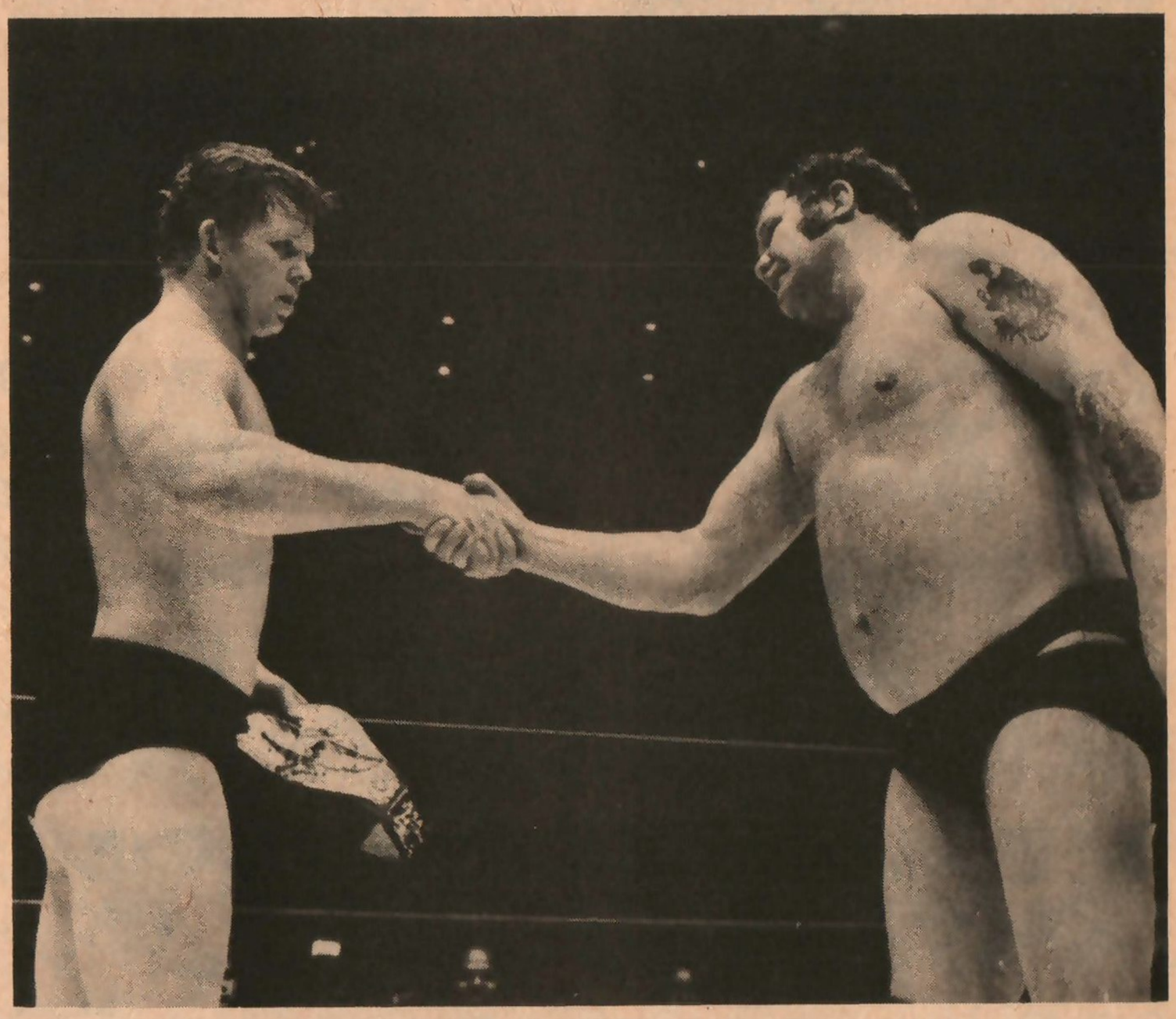
At the conclusion, Backlund went over and shook Harley's hand, then turned away. Race grabbed his NWA belt and slammed it into the back of Backlund's skull!

"Why did I do that? I just wanted to tell him that that is as close as he'll ever get to my belt," Race chuckled.

"That kind of behavior is not surprising coming from someone like Harley Race," Backlund said in his dressing room. "I should have expected it. Race should have met Graham. Maybe they should have killed each other. That would have been the best thing that ever happened to professional wrestling."

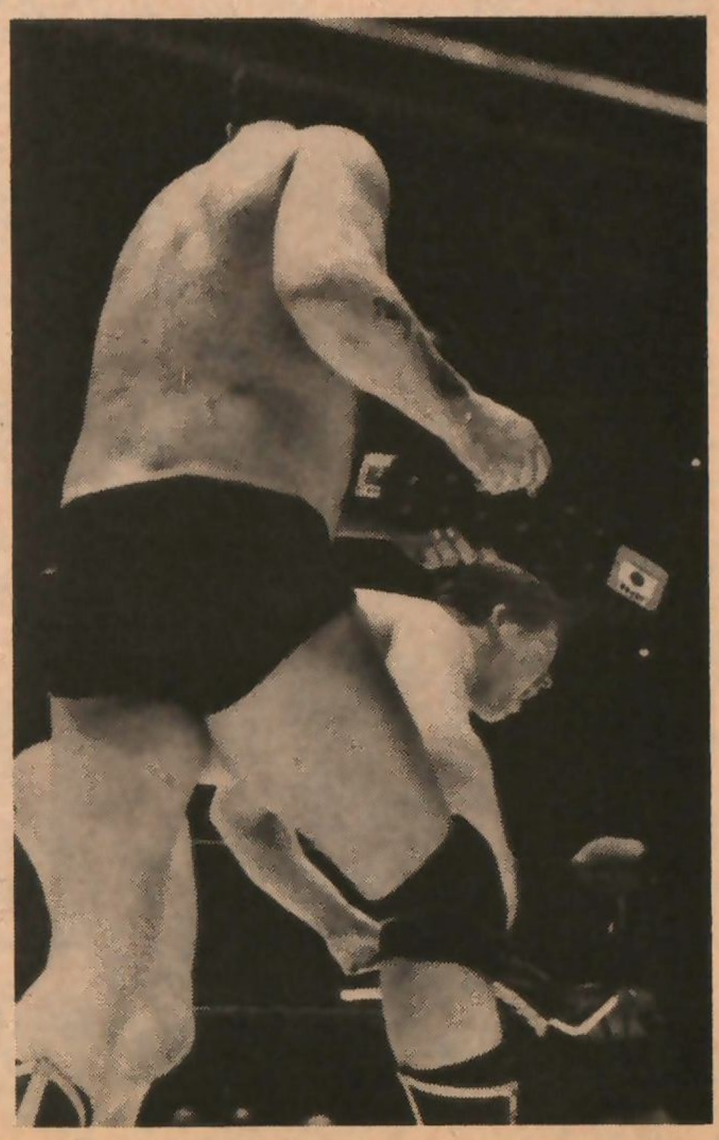
And what happens if another prior Graham commitment emerges?

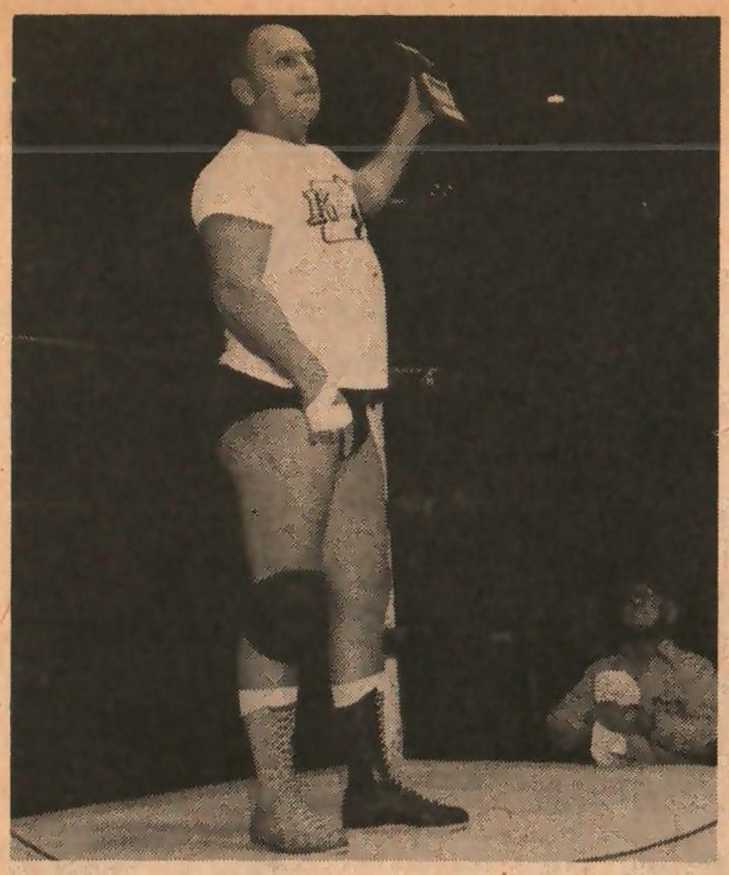
"I'll get the plague," Backlund laughed. □



Bob's headlock effectively weakens the NWA champion. However, Race was able to quickly regain his strength and launch an attack against Backlund.

After the match, what started out as a handshake (above) turned into a violent attack by Race (below). No one believed Harley would ever do so cowardly a move.





A BUILDING IS only as strong as its foundation. It might appear intimidating, might even cast a giant shadow about its smaller neighbors. But if the roots are saturated with rot, its demise is inevitable. All that remains is the catalyst for destruction.

Enter demolition expert Dusty Rhodes. Meet the target, Killer Karl Kox. But please evacuate the street below. One of Kox's arms might injure someone when dislodged from its socket.

Throughout their matches in Florida, Dusty has exhibited great delight in his role. Uncharacteristic delight, we might add.

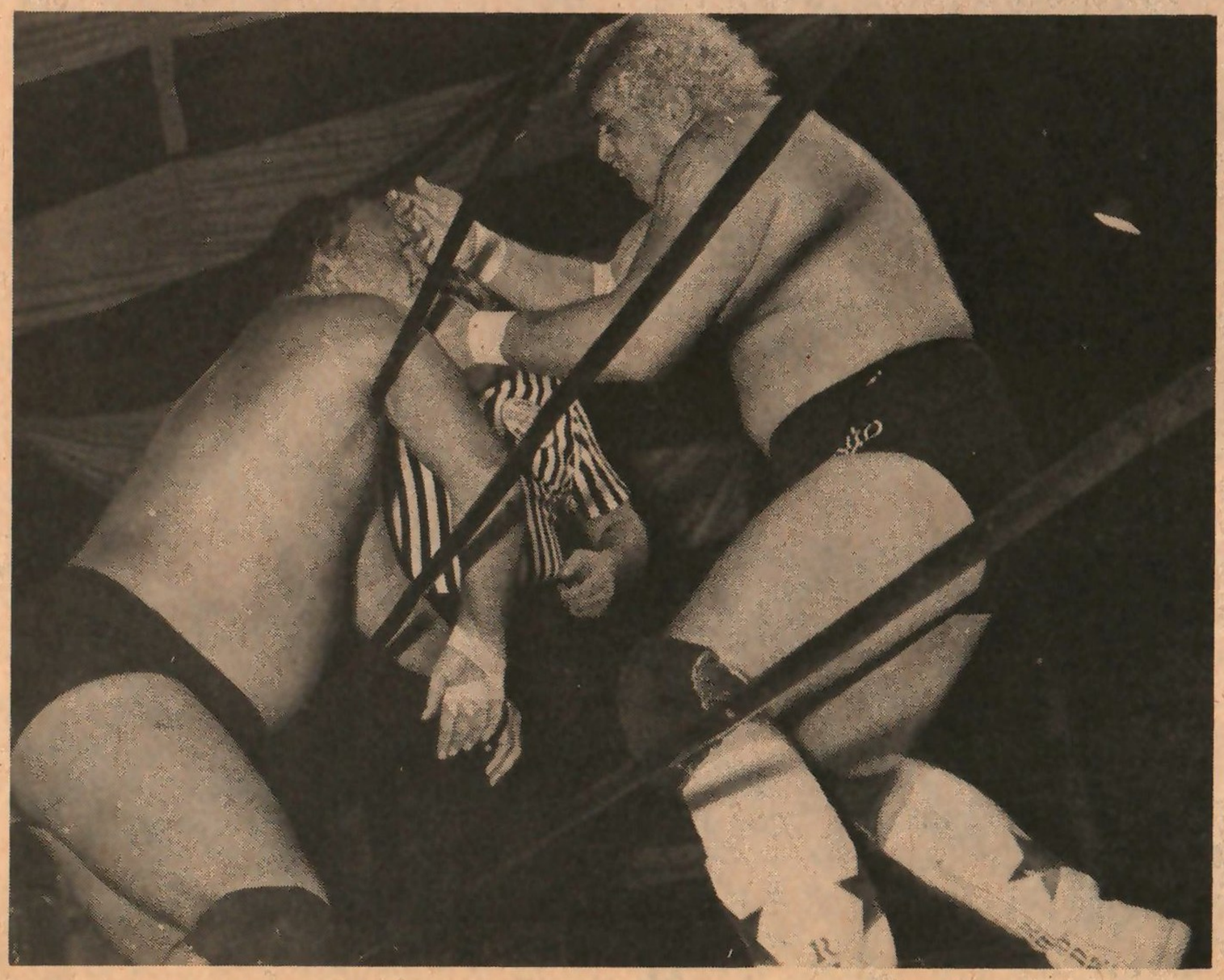
"You can only hold back so much. When I look at him something goes pop inside of me and I just want to level him," Dusty said in explaining his behavior.

Yet Rhodes becomes shockingly quiet when asked about the cause for his contempt.

"He is a disgrace to wrestling," Dusty mumbled, his mouth twitching soundlessly in preparation for another sentence

THE "TOWER OF KILLER KARL KOX

Below: Dusty pays Kox back with an enraged twist of Killer's face. Kox had tried to escape Rhodes' wrath by climbing out of the ring, but the American Dream was not to be denied. He reached over the rope and grabbed Kox's mouth and nose and pulled until blood gushed.



PHOTOS BY PAUL BAUMAN

Killer Karl Kox should have known better. He should never have faced a man so tough as Dusty Rhodes. In this brutal battle, the "Tower of Power" taught Kox a lesson he will not soon forget!

he constrained away.

But what else?

"Nothing else. Isn't that reason enough?" Dusty's eyes blazed in inner fury.

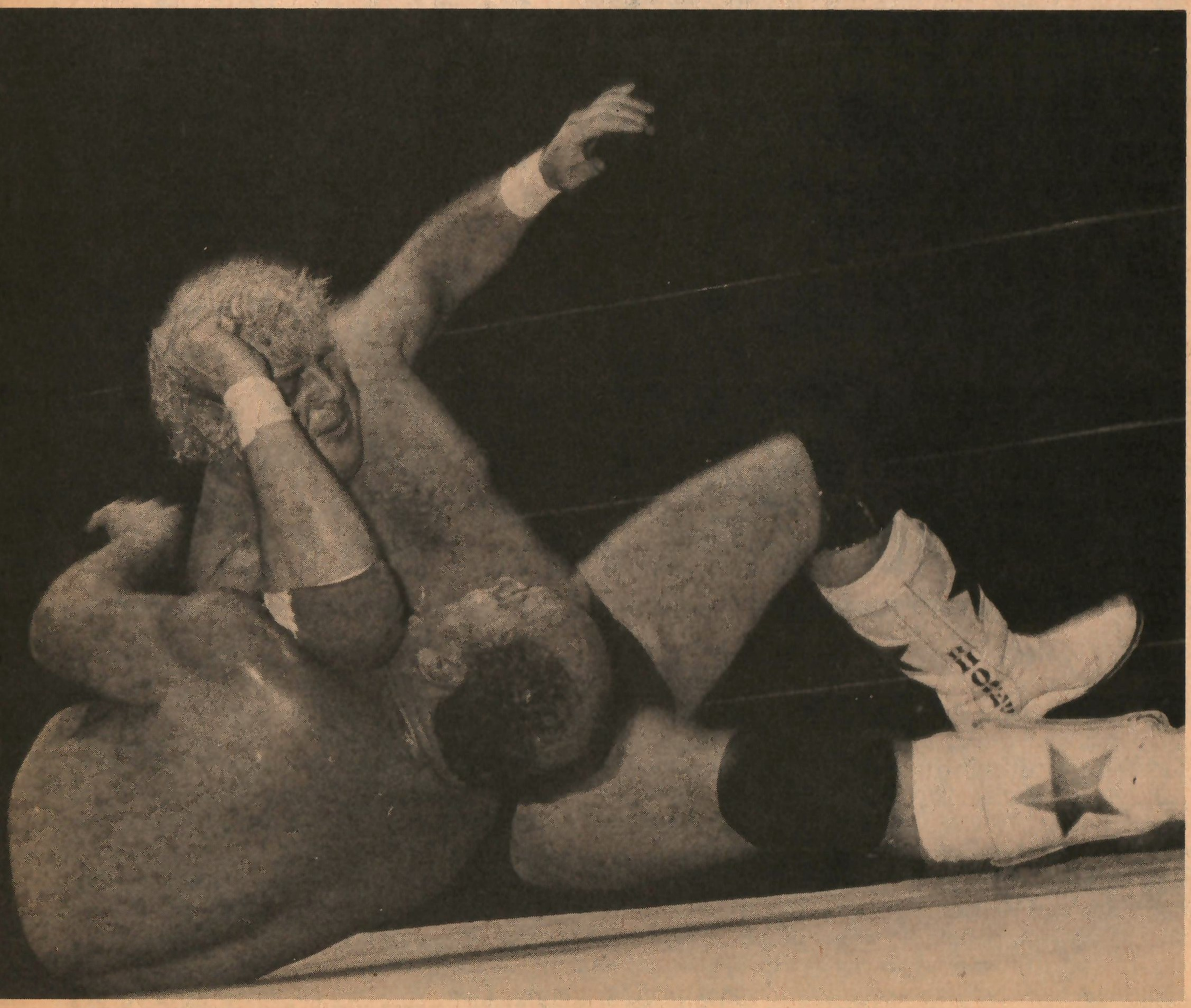
That is interesting. It isn't that Dusty's ethics should be questioned. His reputation for honesty is justifiably based. However, as veteran Dusty Rhodes-watchers, it is easy to see there is more, much, much more.

The first brawl between Rhodes and Kox, the first of several in which they have indulged, may produce a clue. A clue? The entire answer.

Kox, in his typical arrogance, sauntered about the ring right before the match. He strutted and issued some bland threats to the indifferent "American Dream." After launching several crass, inherently ignorant remarks, one such remark found a home in Dusty's neck and caused bulging

(Continued on page 56)

POWER" FALLS ON



Emmanuelle squeezes the body of Jenny at the start of their gruelling battle.

The Sensational Climax Of...

THE UNCHAINED FUR
APARTMENT WRESTL

LIMOUSINES LINED THE street in front of Munich's most exclusive luxury apartment. Cabs pulled up, dropped off their distinguished passengers, and quickly pulled away. Men and women who will someday be immortal artists walked from their hotels. In an hour, some of the most famous and important people in the world would be sipping champagne in the penthouse of industrialist Ozzie Younger.

Already inside the apartment, enjoying the best of all possible worlds, were two of the most beautiful women in the world. Their ever desire was a command, and no expense was spared in carrying out their orders. The evening would find them as contented and prepared as humanly possible.

In one room, relaxing in the whirlpool bath, lay Jenny. This spectacular woman is totally comfortable with her body, like all great athletes. She is fully confident no pain can stop her, no woman can defeat her. She has ignored the reason there will be an apartment wrestling match in a few hours.

In another sumptuously decorated bedroom, going through a series of exercises, labored Emmanuelle. This wonderously beautiful gamin is

Last month, Emmanuelle and Jenny faced each other in one of the most exciting and brutal confrontations in the history of apartment wrestling. However, neither woman emerged as a clear-cut winner. This month, the two ferocious beauties try again. This time, their very existence is at stake!

Jenny is in charge as she uses a legsplit to torture Emmanuelle (left). Notice how Emmanuelle digs her nails into Jenny's body, trying to force her to release the grip. The match is all Jenny's for the time being as she locks up her adversary (below).

Y OF AN ER– PART 2

one of those extraordinary creatures who must be seen in the flesh to fully appreciate her beauty. No camera can hope to capture the excitement and exquisite ferocity which radiates from her presence. She can cast a spell over any man who sees her. Photographs always fail to capture the great beauties.

The women were there because they were two of the

Emmanuelle cries out in pain as Jenny forces her to the floor. Although Jenny did have a large advantage through much of the battle, Emmanuelle gave it her best shot and was able to give Jenny a bruising battle.

most famous apartment wrestlers in the world. Less than a month before this night, Jenny and Emmanuelle brawled in the most ferocious match ever witnessed. When it ended, these two beauties lay exhausted on the carpet, neither having enough strength to claim victory. People sat in awe of their fabulous struggle and its unique conclusion. When both women demanded a rematch, Ozzie Junger was delighted to provide the place.

People flew in from all over the world. Schedules were changed, conferences postponed, and state affairs ignored. Those invited were considered the luckiest people alive. Of course, they had considered themselves lucky all their lives.

The strains of a string quartet greeted the guests as they entered the apartment. Junger always thinks of everything. Scantily clad hostesses flitted around the room bearing trays of elaborate *hors d'oeuvres*. The champagne was the finest. When everyone had arrived, Junger treated them to a dinner only the wealthiest could hope to enjoy. It took three hours before the diners had satiated their appetites.

There was another hour of relaxing before the match. Even as they sipped brandy, the guests were tense with excitement. In minutes, the most exclusive sport in history would enjoy its greatest rematch. That fact colored all conversation, gave an edge to even the simplest statement. Everyone delighted in the anticipation. Only the match could surpass it.

As for the ladies, they waited in very different ways. Jenny nervously paced the room, occasionally stopping for a brief exercise to loosen up. About five minutes before the match, her movements became quicker so she'd break a sweat. Tiny rivulets of sweat appeared in the cleft of her breasts and dampened the hair upon her forehead. Usually, Jenny goes into a match flaunting pristine beauty. However, this battle left no room for any considerations of vanity.

As for Emmanuelle, she spent an hour lost in meditation. She sat in a chair and just stared off into space. Her face was a mask of serenity, but her mind was filled with emotion. For the last time, she recalled the first battle against Jenny, remembering mistakes and her foe's weak spots. Again and again, the important moments of the bout were examined, analyzed and mentally corrected. The fabulous brunette was ready for anything. This was the most important night of her life. The people the world watched were going to be watching her.

No one told the guests when the match was to begin.

Jenny bites Emmanuelle's leg (above) but Emmanuelle reverses things (below), and Jenny can't do much about it.

Everyone seemed to sense it. People sat down in chairs, ended conversations, and made themselves comfortable. It was almost midnight. Most of Munich would be going to sleep. For those sitting in Junger's apartment, however, the night was only beginning.

Dave Moll, the spectacle's leading impresario, summoned each woman. Neither beauty responded immediately. No one had to tell either woman how to extend the dramatic moment. As if guided by a sixth sense, both women emerged from their separate rooms at the same time. Seeing the two beauties, splendid in all manner and form, walk proudly into the room was a sight no one will ever forget.

The women then saw each other. Neither moved. The room was silent. Time froze. The stillness lasted just long enough for the scene to be permanently fixed in everyone's memory. Then, again as if on cue, the women turned and walked to opposite sides of the spacious room.

Once in position, the two women faced each other again. There was something eerie about their movements, as if an invisible, magic connection existed between them. It might have been the result of constantly thinking about the other; it brought them incredibly close together. Emmanuelle was part of Jenny and Jenny existed in Emmanuelle. In this match, each woman would try to exorcise a demon.

Moll stood in the middle of the room. He smiled at each

(Continued on page 58)

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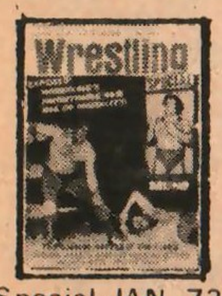
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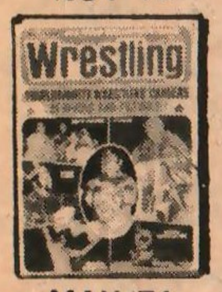
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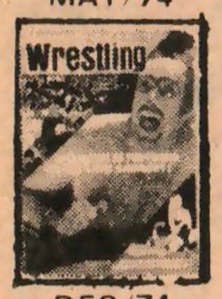
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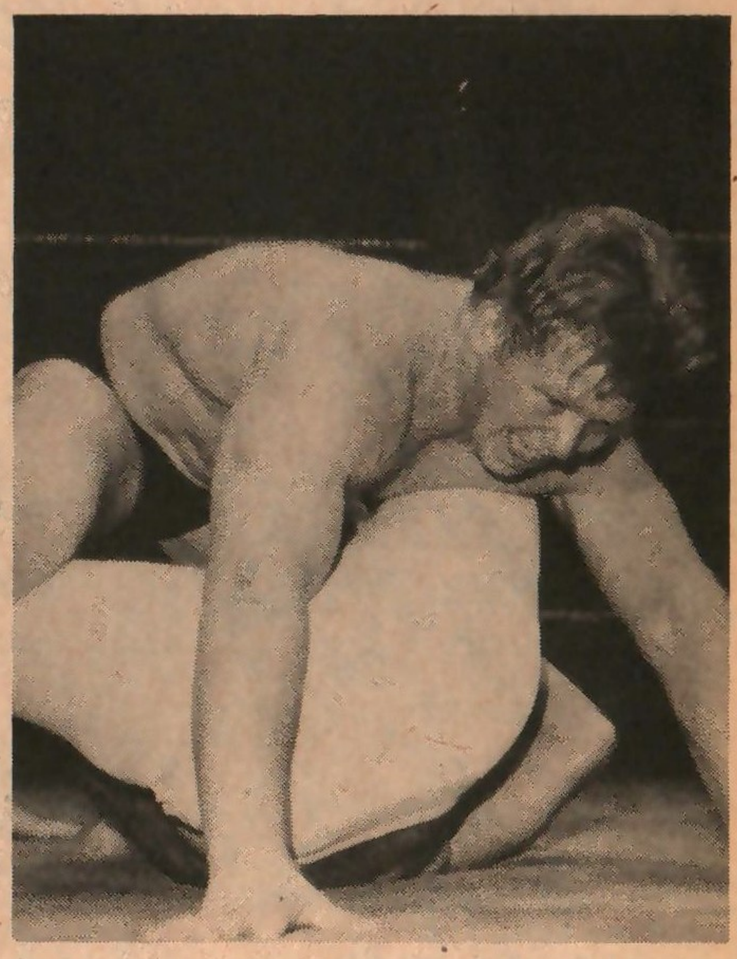
WE ACCUSE

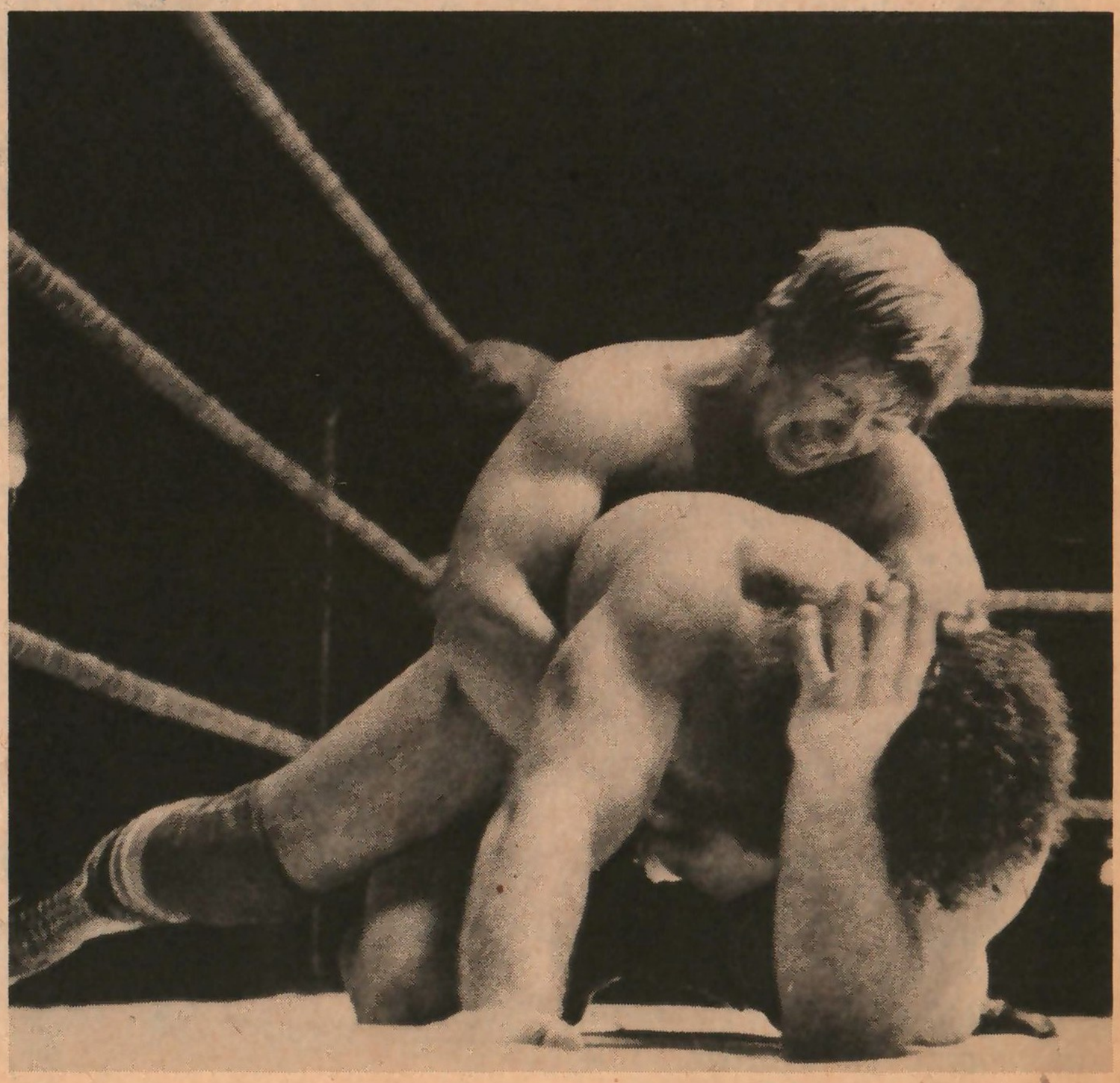
(Continued from Page 8)

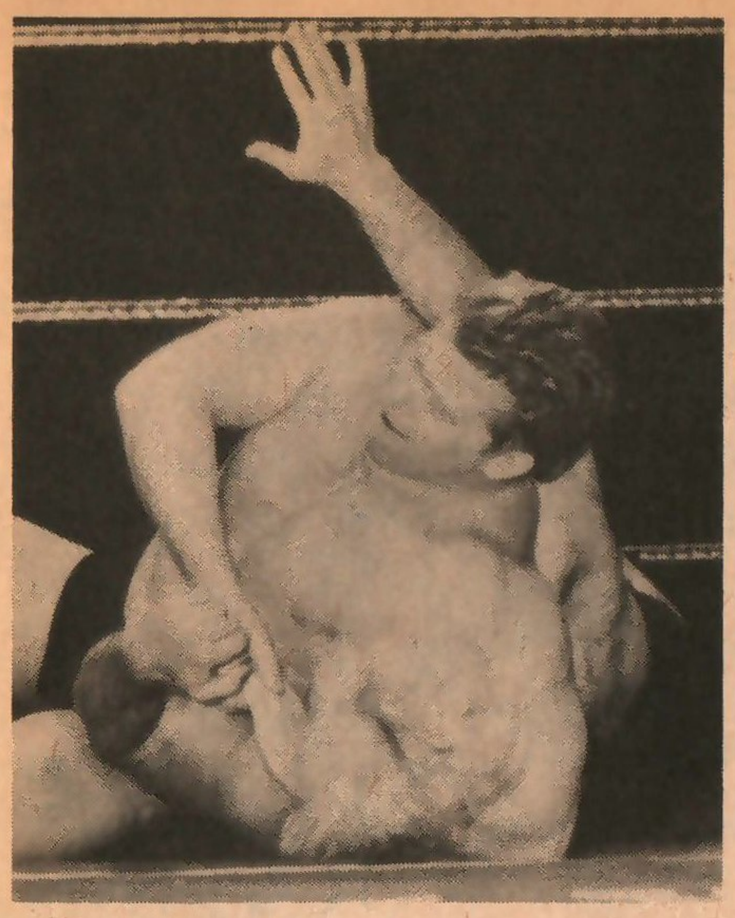
Already many wrestlers are clamoring for a shot at Backlund's title. All feel confident they have a way in which to defeat the young man. Quite frankly, we doubt they do. Bob Backlund has always surprised people. He has always been triumphant, ever since his days as an amateur wrestler. His sense of what to do in the ring has carried him through his matches. He has never tried to shy away from grappling any sort of wrestler—scientific or rule-breaking. He has always known what to do, how to do it, and how to carry through a method of attack. The critics have been silenced. Bob can do it all!

Maybe we should have all listened to what modern technology was telling us. In one of our other magazines (WRESTLING ANNUAL/Fall 1977), a computer picked Bob Backlund as the best wrestler in the sport. Many people found that result difficult to



Above: The highlight of this amazing young man's career was the night he expertly took the WWWF title from Superstar Billy Graham. Below: On his way to the top, Backlund took on Terry Funk. This match convinced many people that Bob was destined to be a world champion!





Soon after the belt changed hands, Ken Patera challenged the new champion. He was later sorry that he did.

understand. In fact, we had some trouble ourselves accepting what the computer had to say. Now we know the computer was right; Backlund is the best. He's proven it.

This is not to say that we think Bob Backlund is going to walk on water for us. He has his faults, and we would be derelict in our duty if we didn't point these out. He lacks the "killer instinct," that added bit of aggression he may need in order to keep his belt for a long time. He still needs to add a few more varied maneuvers to his repertoire. And while the fans admire him and his skills, he has yet to earn the love fans give so freely to men like Dusty Rhodes. His youthfulness sometimes clouds people's vision; they see the enthusiastic boy without catching the wonder of the man. He will have to mature into the role of world champion.

As the first of the new generation of wrestlers to achieve a championship, Bob has shown he has considerable talents. But what lies ahead for him? As we said, he has what it takes to enjoy a long reign as king of the WWWF.

We wish Bob all the luck he can get. He's done something tremendous, and he deserves to be praised for it. But what happens next is entirely up to him. □

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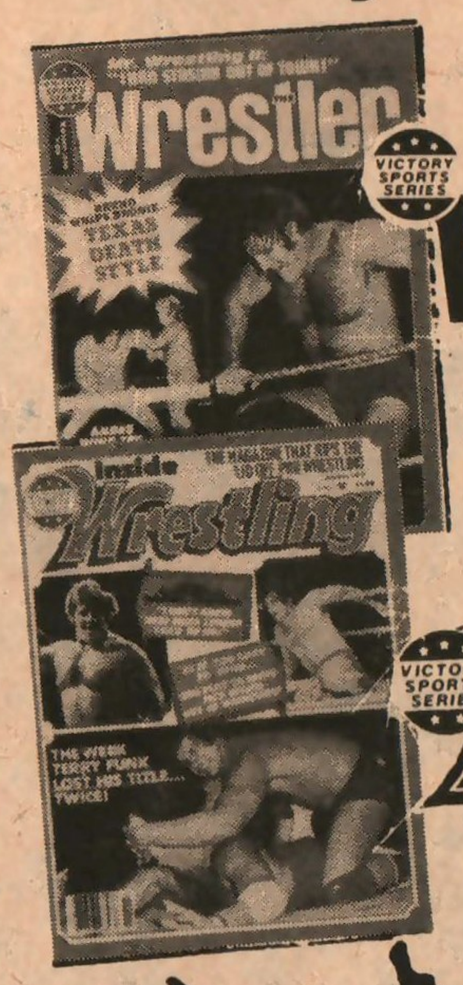

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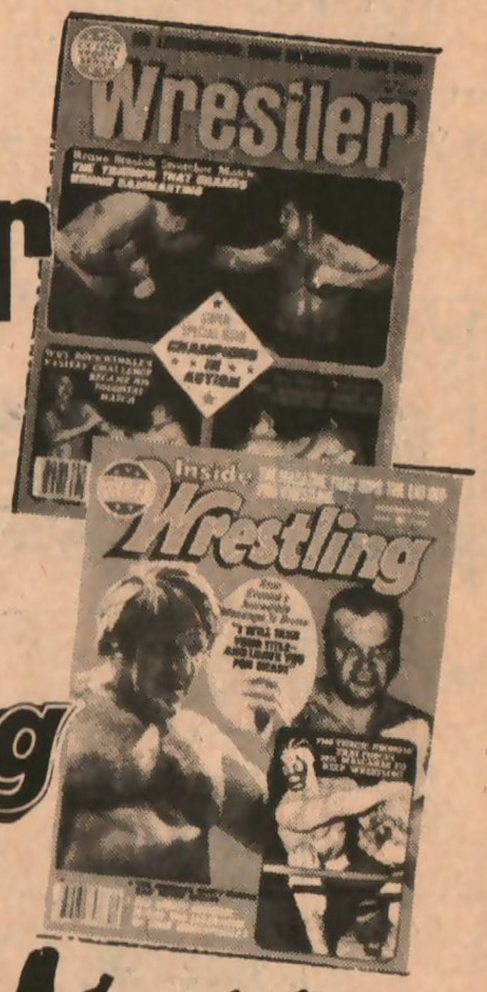

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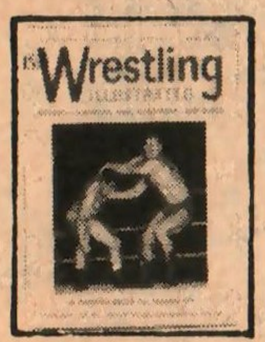

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THE TATTLER

(Continued from Page 10)

INDIANAPOLIS, IND.—With Bruno Sammartino appearing here on a semi-regular basis now, the entire wrestling scene has changed. There is no doubt a lot of local rulebreakers are terrified at the prospect of going into battle against a man like Sammartino. And for good reason. They know Bruno can defeat them all!

So far as I am concerned, the tag team of Sammartino and Bruiser is, for all intents and purposes, unbeatable. When

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

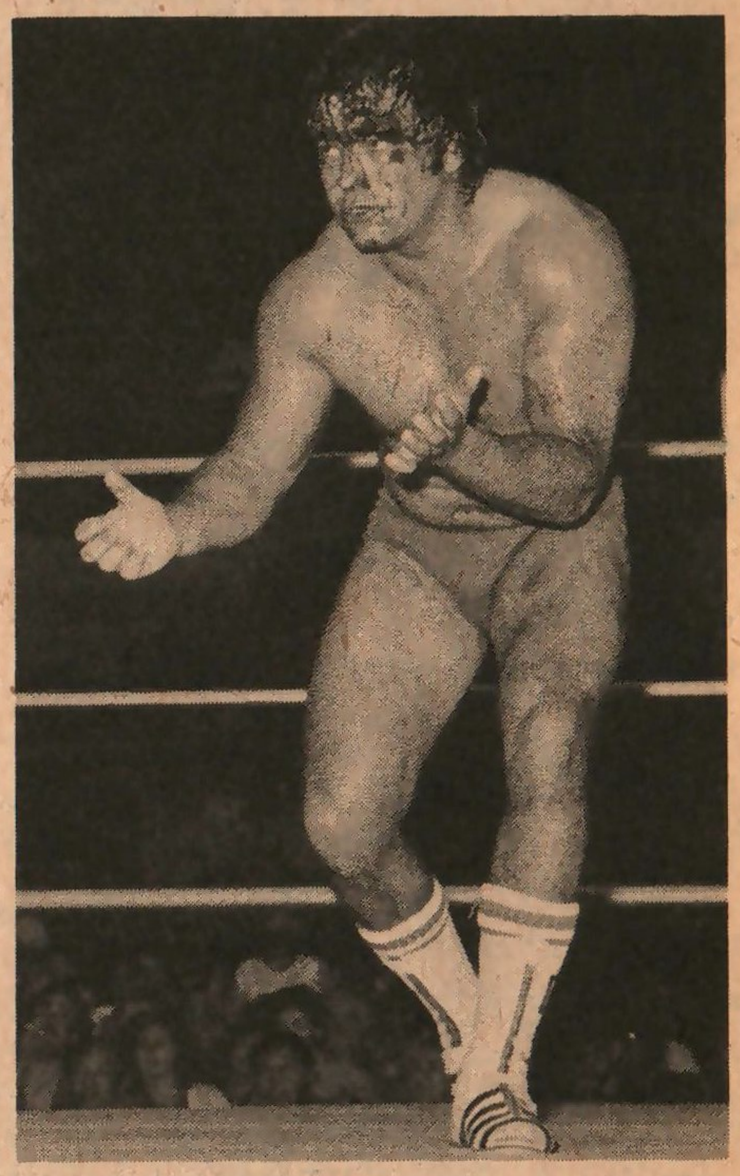
these two veteran greats get together, the action is guaranteed to be explosive. Feel pity for their opponents—they have no chance to win against this duo.

—Ed Remington

LOS ANGELES, CAL.—Whatever happened to Chavo Guerrero? You must remember him, the young man who was acclaimed as the "Million Dollar Rookie" just a few years ago. Has he lived up to the expectations of the cartel of Mexican millionaires backing him?

There are no easy answers for these questions. There is no doubt that Chavo is still one of the best young wrestlers in the sport. No one questions his abilities. But many people have begun to wonder about the way in which his career has been handled.

Everyone held such high hopes for Chavo. When he was still a rookie, everyone was sure he was destined to become champion of the NWA within two years. It hasn't happened. Granted, he is still in the



CHAVO GUERRERO

running for the title, but he is not the number one contender. How did Chavo fall from grace?

Many people believe he was rushed too soon into championship matches. Maybe if he had been given more time to develop his skills, he would be wearing the belt today. Maybe if he had been given better advice, had paid more attention to mistakes others had made in the past, Chavo would

be the superstar he should be.

But don't discount Chavo's prospects. He is still young. He still has time. Now with a slow and steady ascent, he may yet capture the NWA belt.

—Danny Torres

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—Is there anybody left who does not think Ric Flair deserves to be permanently banned from the sport? Is there anybody left who does not think Ric Flair is the most vicious wrestler of them all? Is there anybody left who does not think Ric Flair has done more damage to more wrestlers than any other rulebreaker?

If there is anybody who does not think this way, let him step forward and make his views known. I would like to hear a defense of this alleged human being.

Personally, I don't think there is one.

—Ellen Larsen

TAMPA, FLA.—Killer Karl Kox is crazy. Let no one make any mistake about it. No other wrestler has ever been so uncontrollable inside or outside the ring. Even rulebreakers are afraid of him.

He has made it abundantly clear he hates all scientific wrestlers. He will do anything he can to destroy his opponents. We are all expecting there may soon be a murder. Of course, nothing could please Kox more!

We do not understand how the state athletic commission could allow this man to have a license. By all rights, he should have been committed long ago. Now is the time to stop him. But who can do it? Who can put an end to the curse of Killer Karl Kox?

—Barry Simon

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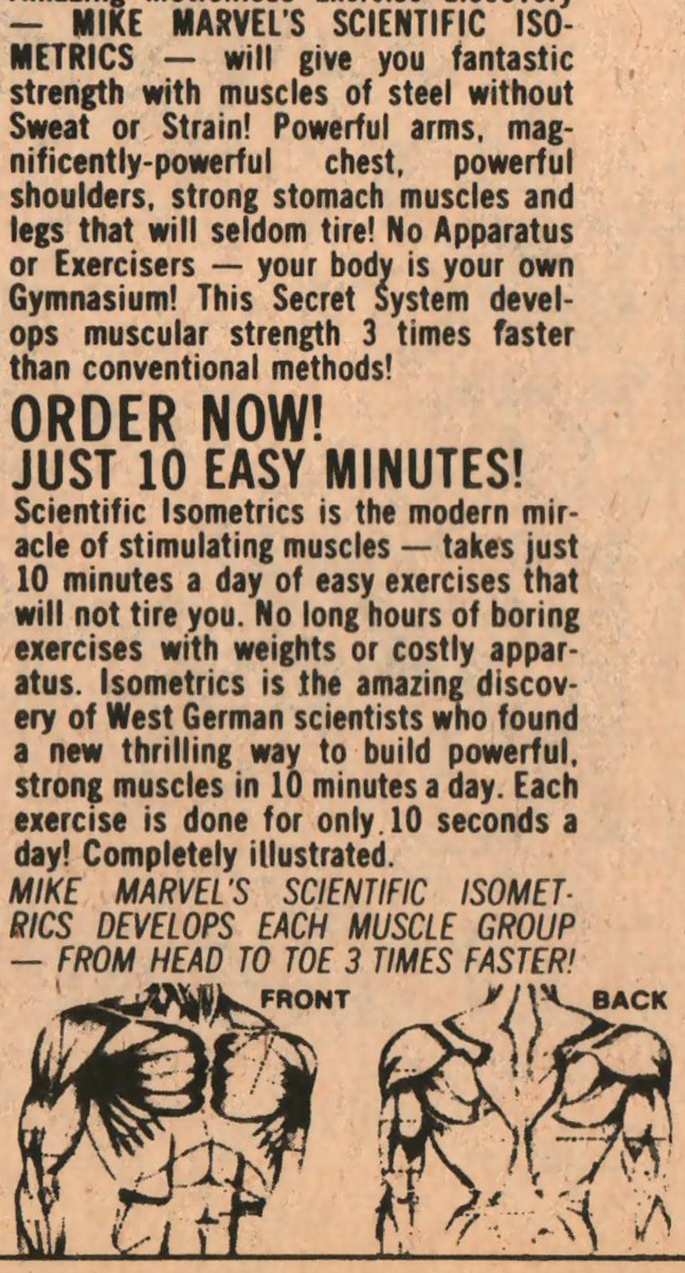

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WRESTLER OF THE MONTH

(Continued from Page 12)

the ring I was in shock. I just couldn't believe I had beaten Harley Race and won the Missouri state title."

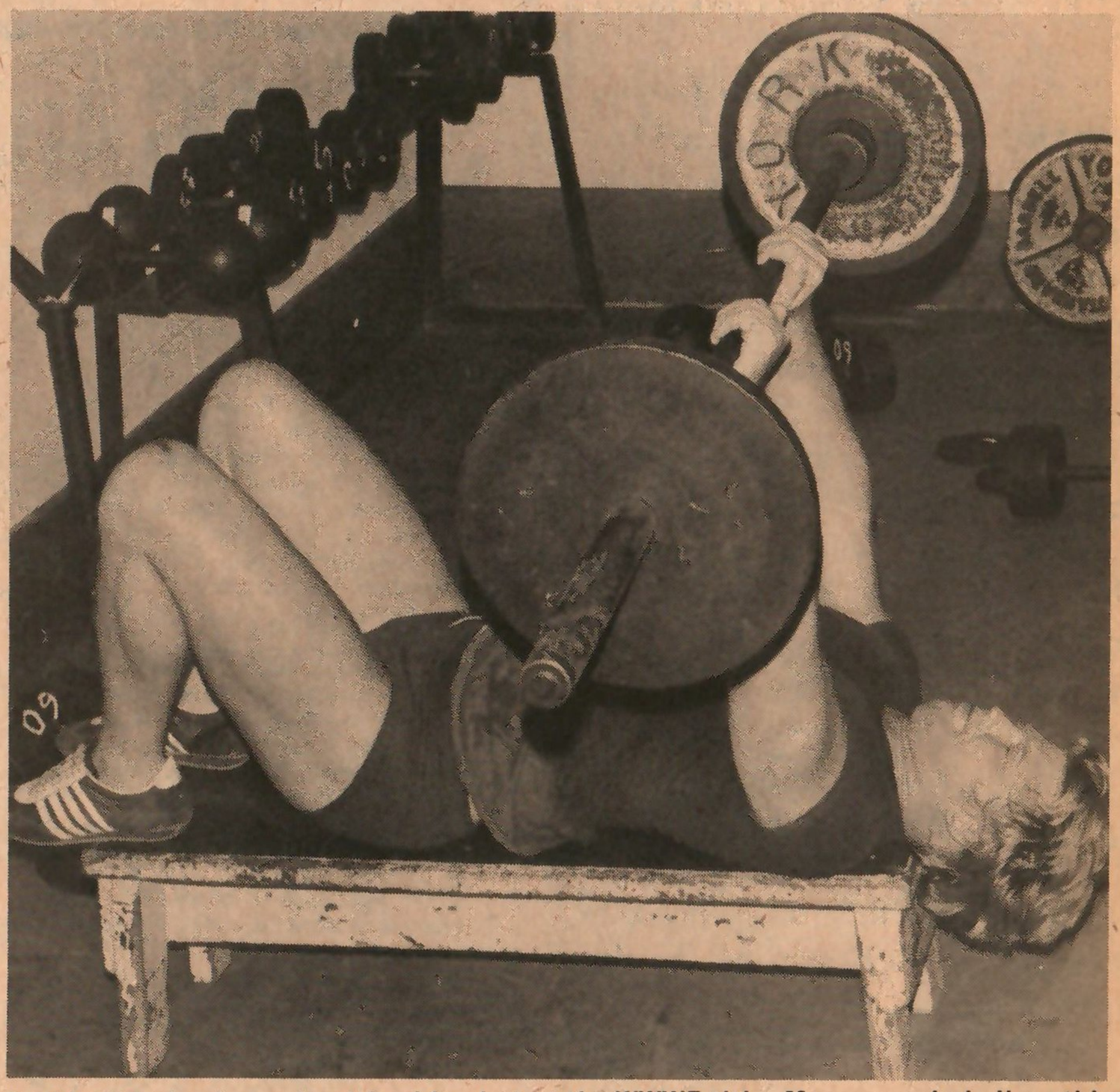
That win catapulted Backlund into the upper echelon of title contenders. He was still a long way from the belt however.

"A lot of people got carried away after that win. They wanted to push me into a title match with Bruno Sammartino right away. I wasn't ready for that. Then, when Graham beat Sammartino, I realized I just had to get into top condition to get the belt away from that barbarian. That was inspiration enough."

The calculating dedication of Bob Backlund was apparent from the consumately professional manner in which he prepared for Graham. Those attributes of determination and confidence, with great care given to his formidable techniques, were amply displayed that evening in the Garden. But did he think he would win?

"Yes and no, said Bob. "I was totally confident of my own abilities. Darn, did I train for this one! But when you're wrestling Superstar Billy Graham, there's a limit on how much you can prepare. He's so unpredictable and fiendish that he's liable to do anything to you in the ring. But I did have my atomic spinebreaker. That's more than an equalizer."

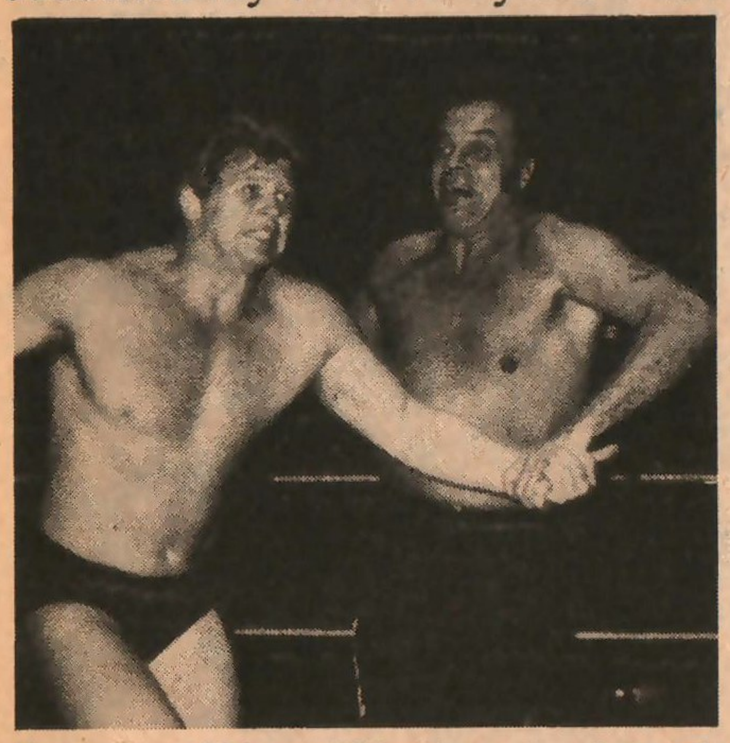
That brilliant move which proved far too powerful for



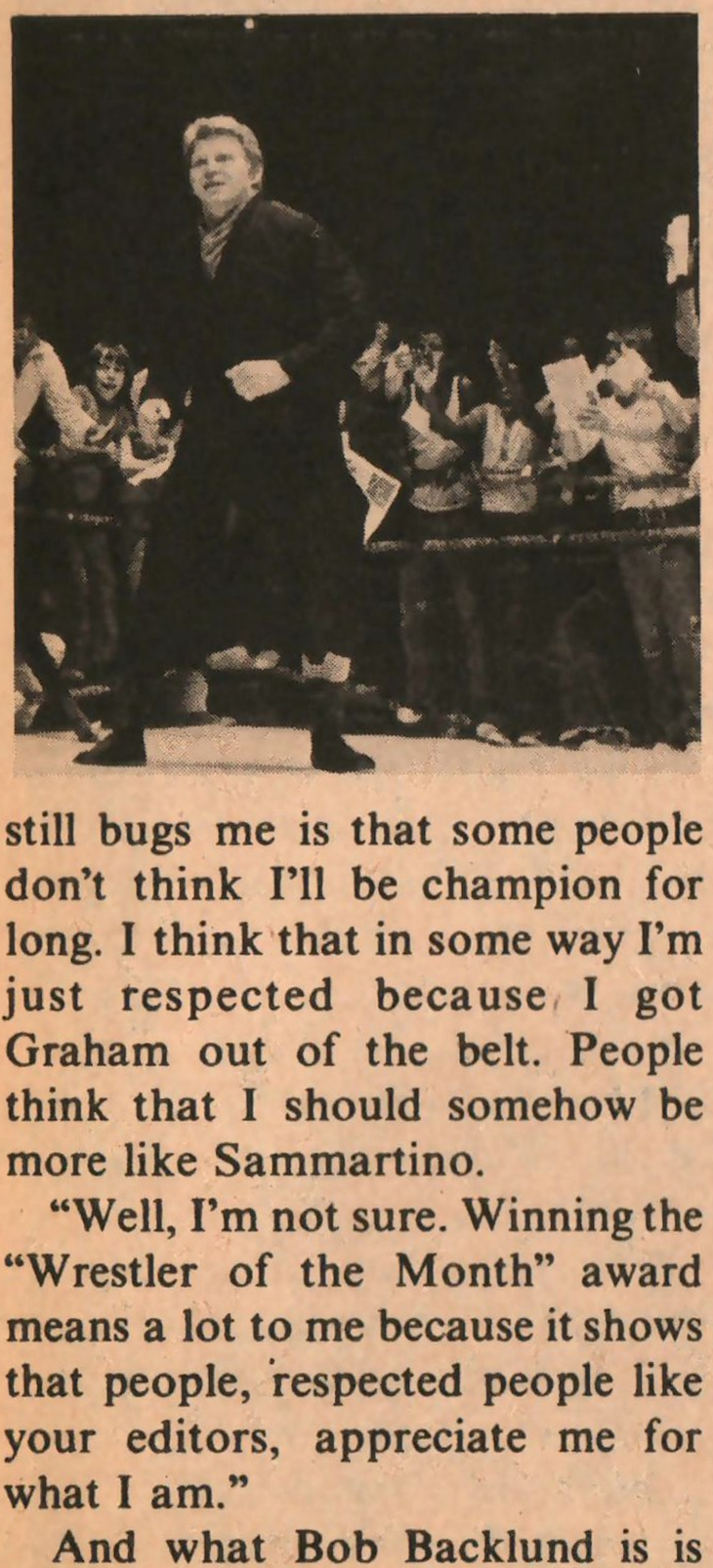
Backlund trained very hard for his shot at the WWWF title. Many people believe this well-conditioned athlete will be able to keep his championship for many years to come.

Graham typifies this new champion's ingenuity. As a well-learned man, it is hoped Backlund will be capable of building upon that move and will demonstrate a wide strata of similarly devastating holds.

"I've never lacked for confidence, that's for sure. Winning the WWWF belt has just solidified my belief in myself. What



Bob proved his abilities in a classic battle against Stan Stasiak (above). This rapidly rising star has fans wherever he goes (below).



still bugs me is that some people don't think I'll be champion for long. I think that in some way I'm just respected because I got Graham out of the belt. People think that I should somehow be more like Sammartino.

"Well, I'm not sure. Winning the "Wrestler of the Month" award means a lot to me because it shows that people, respected people like your editors, appreciate me for what I am."

And what Bob Backlund is is "Wrestler of the Month." □

SPECIAL BACK ISSUES

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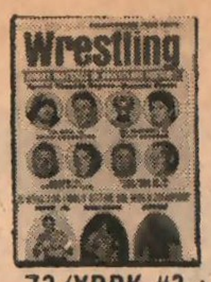
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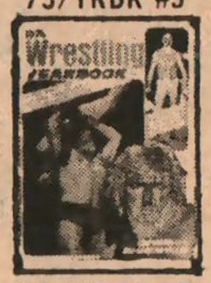
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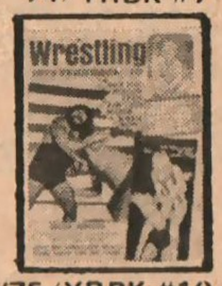
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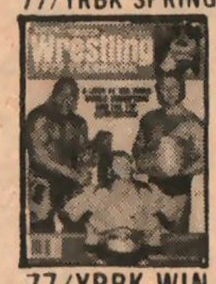
'77/YRBK SPRING

77/YRBK SUM

77/YRBK FALL


77/YRBK WIN

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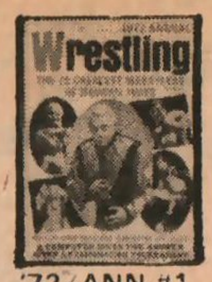
VICTORY SPORTS **ANNUALS**

'70/ANNUAL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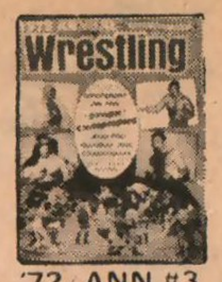
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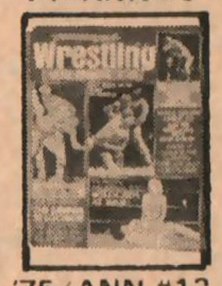
'75/ANN #11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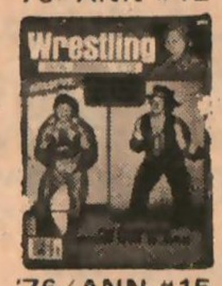
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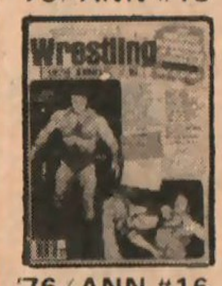
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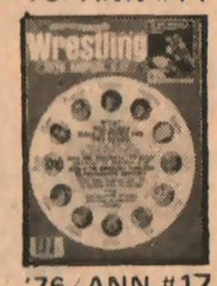
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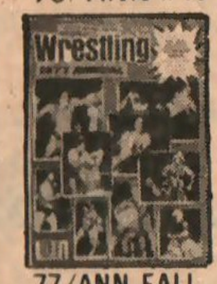
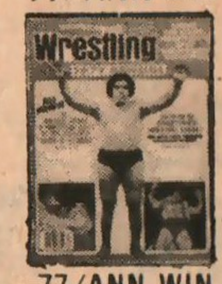
'77/ANN #18

'77 ANN SUMMER


77/ANN FALL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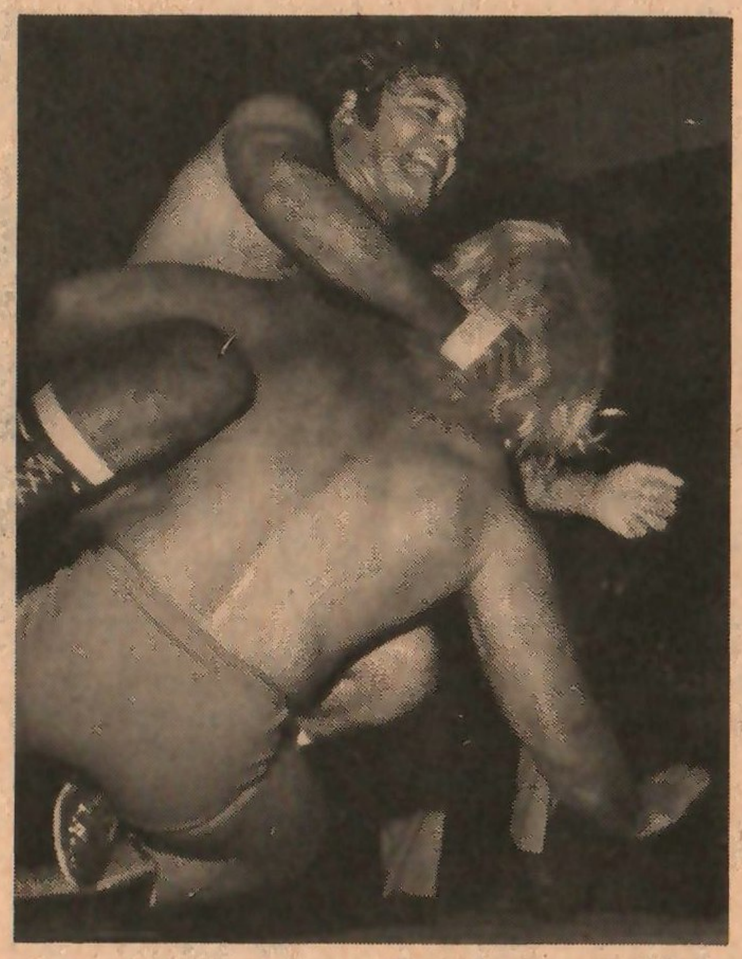
PAUL JONES

(Continued from Page 25)

Above: In his one opportunity to win the belt, Paul managed to come very close to winning the title. Below: Jones has proven his courage and strength in his brutal matches against the notorious Ric Flair.



hung on the wall. "I don't have anything against Jones. I don't think he's as good as he might think he is. Sure, he did well against the Funks and Brisco.

"But my matches are dependent on the quality of competition. I don't think Jones would give me a good match. What's that? Yeah, I am better than Brisco. Who's wearing the belt now? If Brisco could beat Jones and I beat Brisco, what would I do to Paul? Think you're bright enough to answer that one yourself?"

There was something unnervingly secretive about the way Race kept averting my eyes. He seemed discomforted by the question. I left with the feeling that the truth was still hidden. In fear or duplicity?

"I think I deserve a shot against Race," Jones continued. "Every joker off the street is getting a chance and I don't think this is fair. Speculate? All right, I'll give you speculation if that's what you want."

I leaned forward in my seat, suddenly frightened by the impassioned set of Paul's features.

"The rulebreakers are afraid that their days are numbered in professional wrestling. Since Backlund's victory over Graham I have seen a trend toward the scientific wrestlers finally displacing the rulebreakers.

"Bockwinkle and Race know they're on their way out. That's why Race is afraid to wrestle me. Yeah, I do think it's Race, though it's not just limited to him. He knows that if I get the title that will make two out of three federation belts worn by scientific wrestlers. Then someone decent will bump off Nick [Bockwinkle] and the championships will finally be cleansed.

Time and again Paul has proven he is a top contender. So why is Harley Race afraid to face him in a title battle?

"That's my speculation, but I'll never be able to prove it. Maybe you'll have better luck than I think," Jones said, tears of frustration filling his dark eyes.

I decided to try one more avenue. I contacted a well-placed source at NWA headquarters.

"Jones? Hah, he'll never get a shot at the title. Why? Because of Harley Race. And only Race knows why. You'll never get it out of him or prove it, so what I've told you is worthless information."

I phoned Jones and told him that.

"I'm not surprised," he said sadly. "Not surprised at all." □

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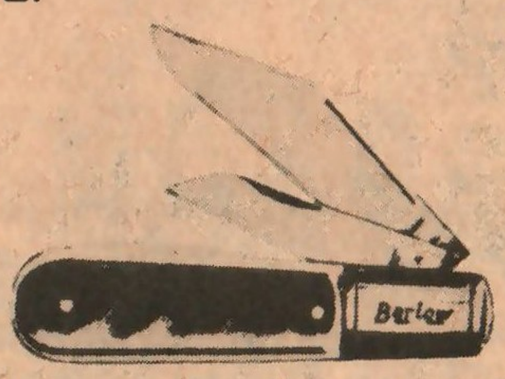

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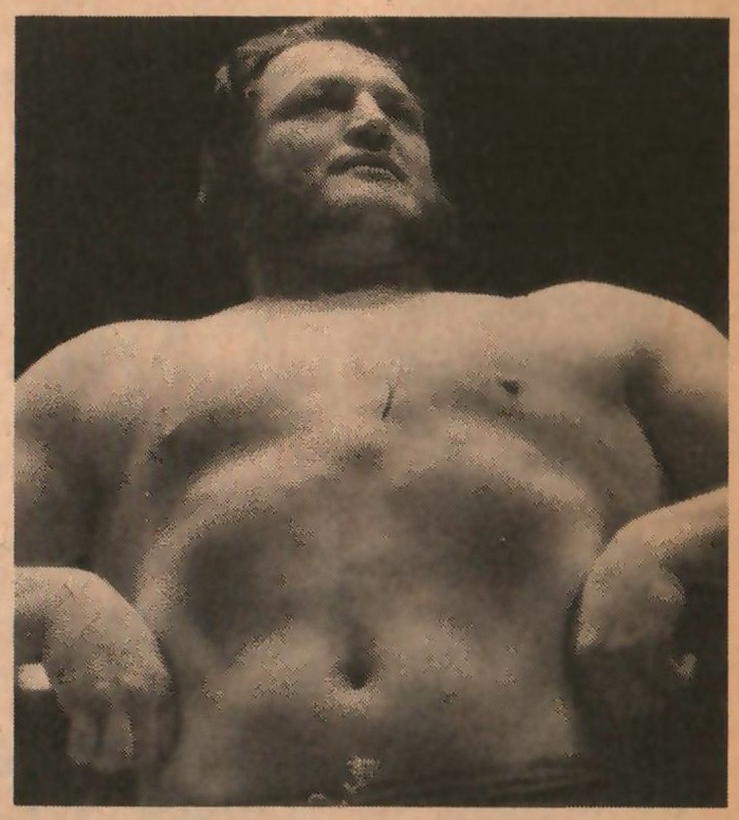
MAILBAG

(Continued from Page 18)

your magazine has any friends and that's why you say these things.

ANDREW BLACK
Rye, N.Y.



The Valiant Brothers are climbing back up the wrestling ladder with their old tricks (left). Don Leo Jonathan has a point (above).

LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS

All you ever hear about are the scientific wrestlers moaning about the bad boys of professional wrestling. Now that the Valiant brothers are on their way back, let's see if those good guys can stop them or if they're all a bunch of hot air. ("They'll Be Back" [May 1978]).

I applaud the Valiant brothers, despite their methods, because they have the guts to climb back up and show they can't be stopped. I hope they regain the title because they are tougher than the sissies who scream about them.

SAMUEL HOUK
Baltimore, Md.

TRADITION IS FINE

I never thought I'd see the day when I'd agree with someone like Don Leo Jonathan. But his argument for keeping wrestling the way it has always been is exactly the way I feel. That's why I liked his "Point-Counterpoint" (May 1978).

Too often people just want change for the sake of change without thinking about whether it is good or not. Sure, there must be progress, but not just for progress but because it means something. Wrestling is great the way it is. I find it reassuring to know that I can watch this wonderful sport and it is as it was 20 years ago. And my children can say the same thing someday.

JAMES T. EAGAN
Richmond, Va.

EVERYONE SHOULD BE LIKE HIM

As a mother of five children with a grandchild on the way, I just thought it necessary to write this letter and praise Rick Steamboat. That young man certainly has a mind. He recognizes that we all have our dark sides but he has the courage to stay with his better instincts.

Steamboat is fighting for what he believes in. That's not an easy thing to do. There should be more men, both in and out of wrestling, who are willing to make the sacrifices and fight for their principles.

SYLVIA LEMPSKY
Milwaukee, Wisc. □

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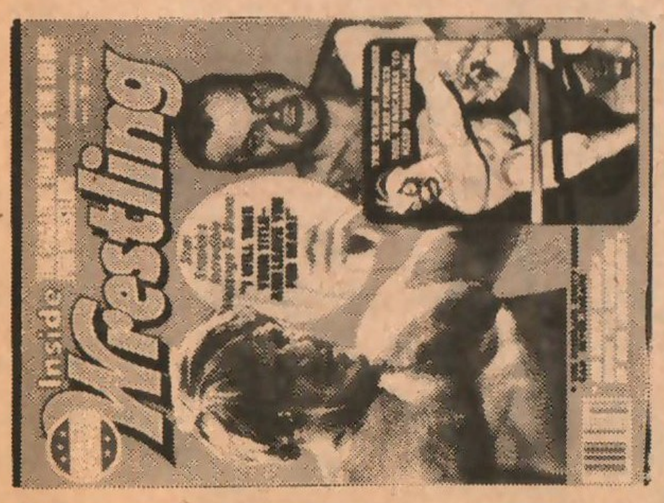

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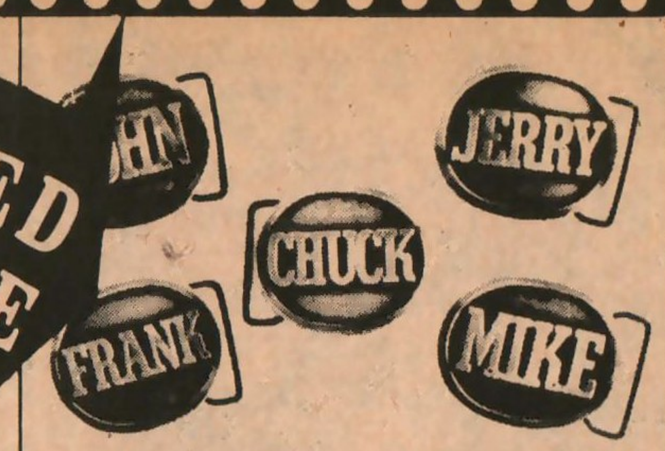

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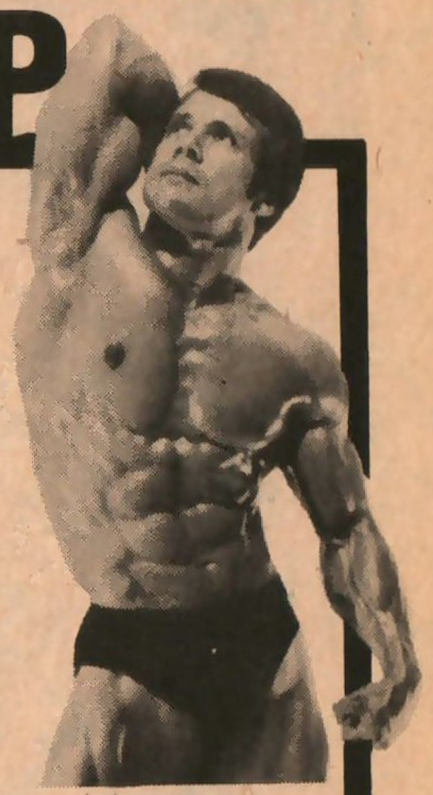

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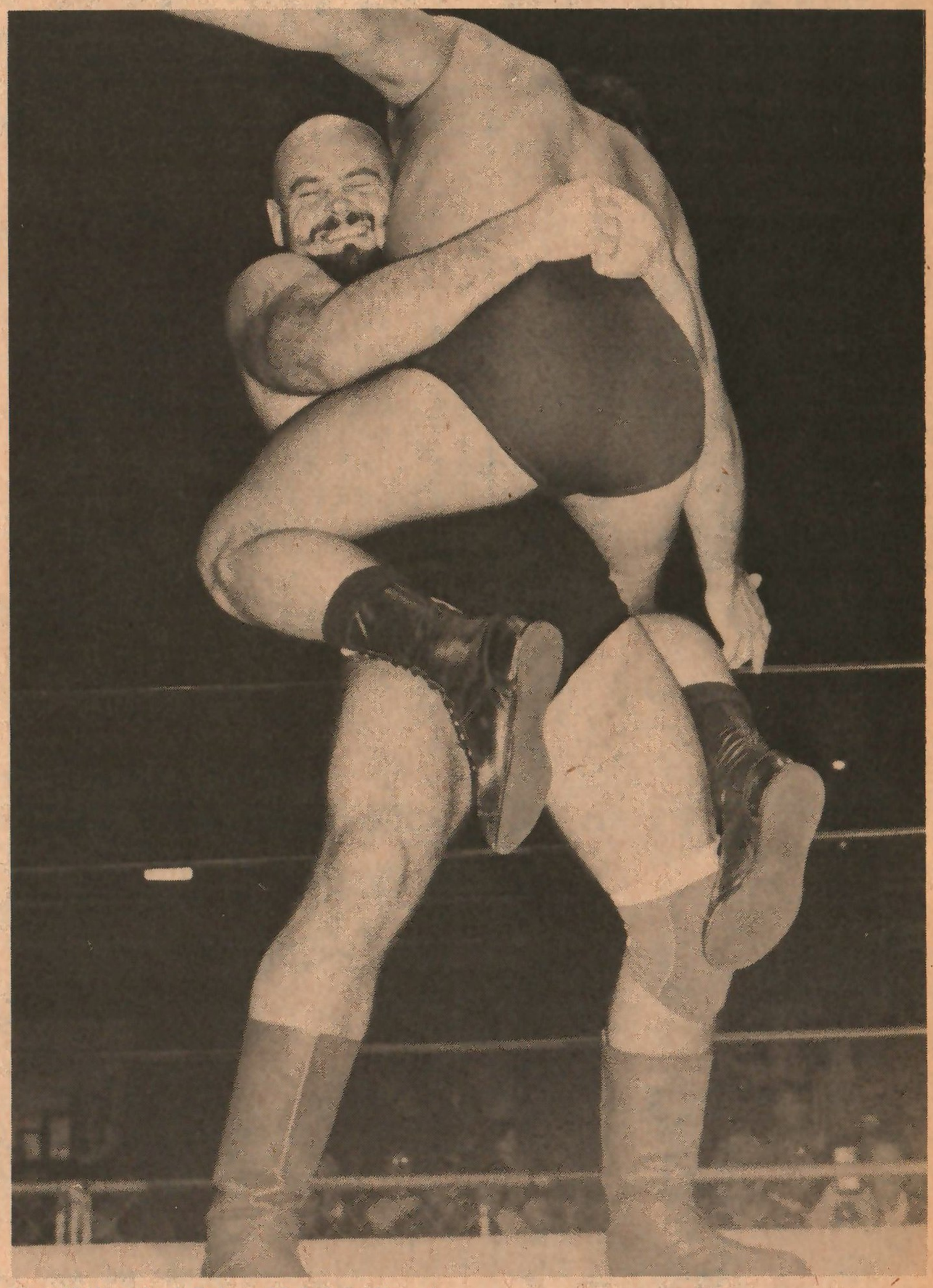
IVAN KOLOFF

(Continued from Page 33)



Koloff lifts Jack Brisco high into the air, preparing to slam him to the mat.

like the man. There will never come a time when I can understand the man. But I have to respect him, in spite of all he has done. He commands respect.

"To me, Ivan Koloff is the toughest there is. Believe me, I know. I have wrestled many different men over the course of my career. I have battled the most vicious rulebreakers in the sport. I've had men purposely try to cripple me for the sheer joy of seeing me in agony. And to what end? I've forgotten half of them. I've let the memories of those matches fade into oblivion, never to be recalled. But not Ivan Koloff. One does not forget Ivan Koloff. One can't forget Ivan Koloff."

What is it about this man that earns him this grudging respect from scientific wrestlers like Jack Brisco? How can Jack admire Koloff, a man who has

treated him so savagely in the ring? What sets Ivan off from other rulebreakers, and why do so many men fear him?

There are no easy answers. Koloff is not easy to understand. But by watching Koloff in action, we can better know how he has commanded such respect. And maybe we too can learn to admire his talents while condemning his actions.

"For some reason which I cannot explain," said Brisco, "Ivan Koloff does a strange thing to his opponents. He forces us to go to our absolute limit and beyond, giving more of ourselves in a match than we ever thought we could. Koloff takes a mediocre wrestler and challenges him to wrestle well. He takes an excellent wrestler and makes him superb. I've seen it happen time and again. I don't know how he does it. I only know it's true.

"There is something about the man which commands excellence in his opponents. He makes us do our best and more. He is so tough, so vicious, we must call up our reserves. It is as if he is telling us the only way to beat him is to be glorious. You know, the more I think about this, the less I understand it."

In a recent match against Koloff, Jack's contentions were borne out. Both men wrestled superbly, using maneuvers which would normally seem to be out of their range. Jack was especially good. And despite some rather questionable moves by Ivan, Brisco was able to be triumphant, though the victory came very late in the match, when both men were extremely tired. Even in defeat, Koloff wrestled well, displaying a wide range of skills which went beyond ruthlessness.

"Let others think what they might," stated Brisco. "But as for me, Ivan Koloff is the toughest there is. That's it." □

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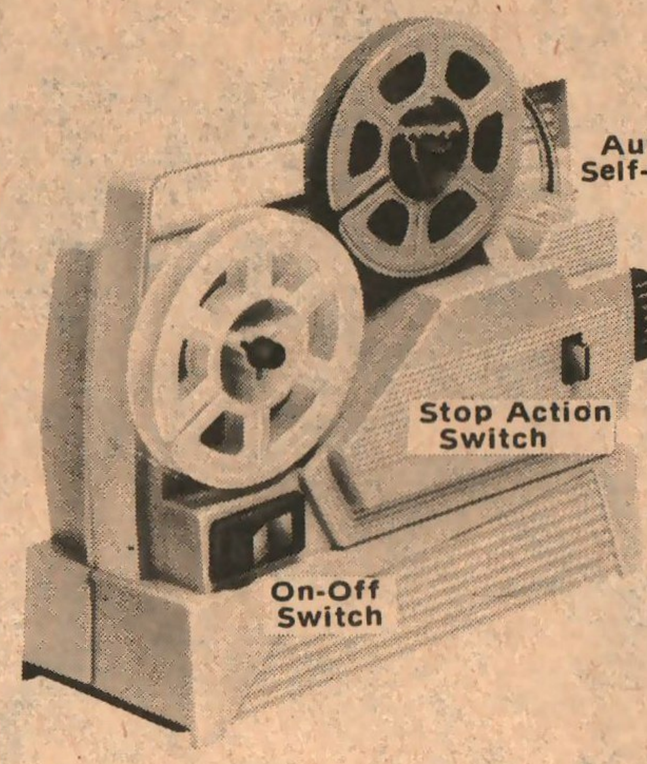

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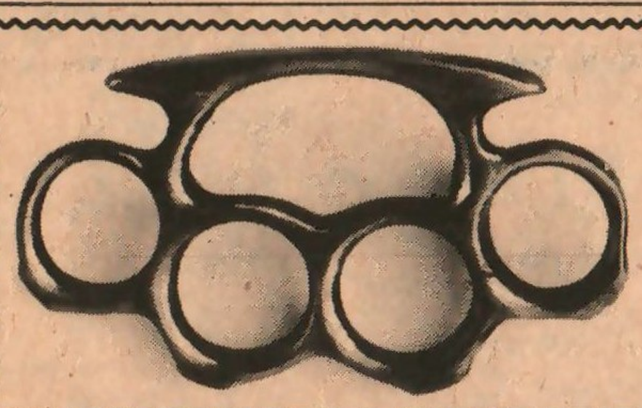

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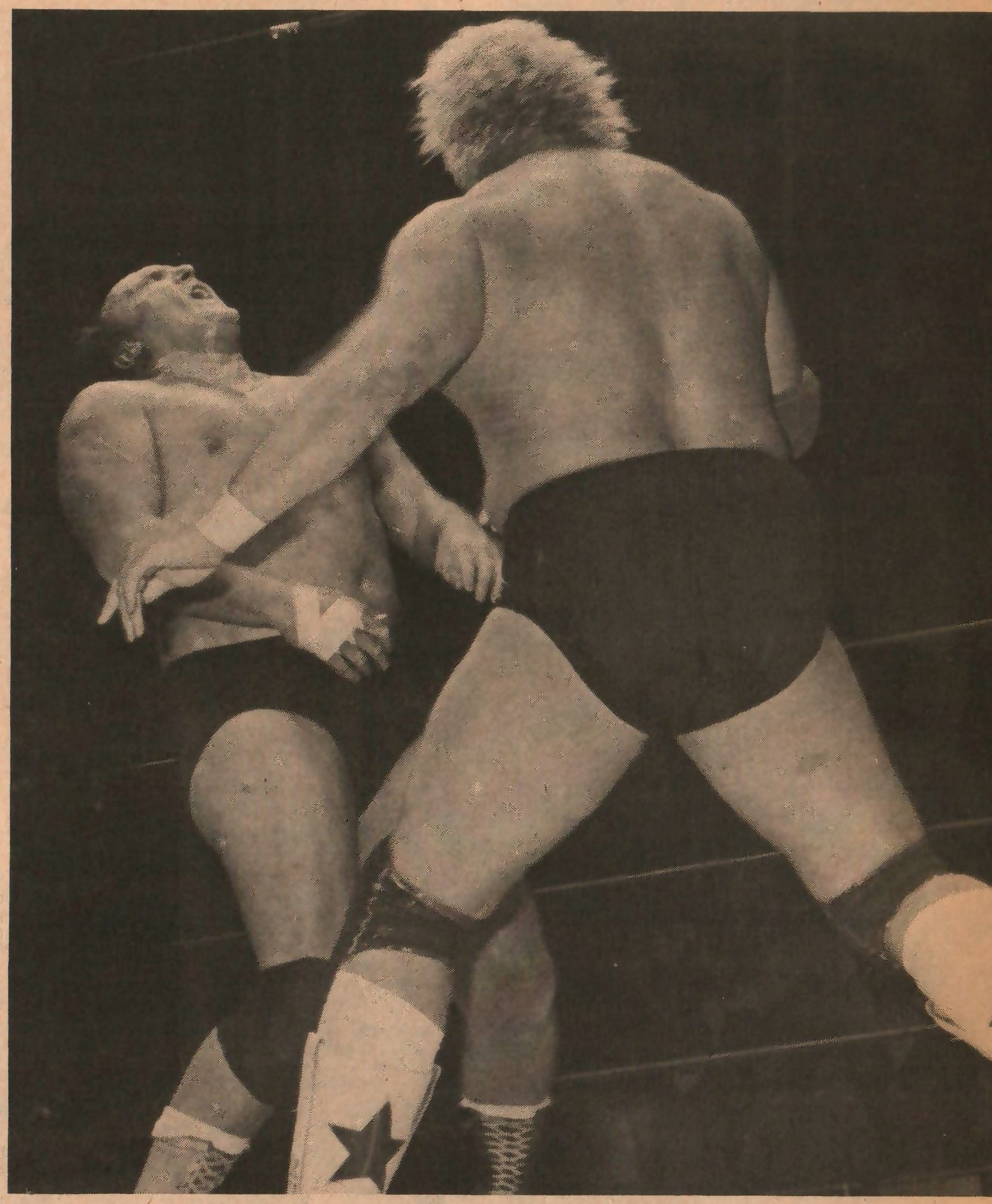
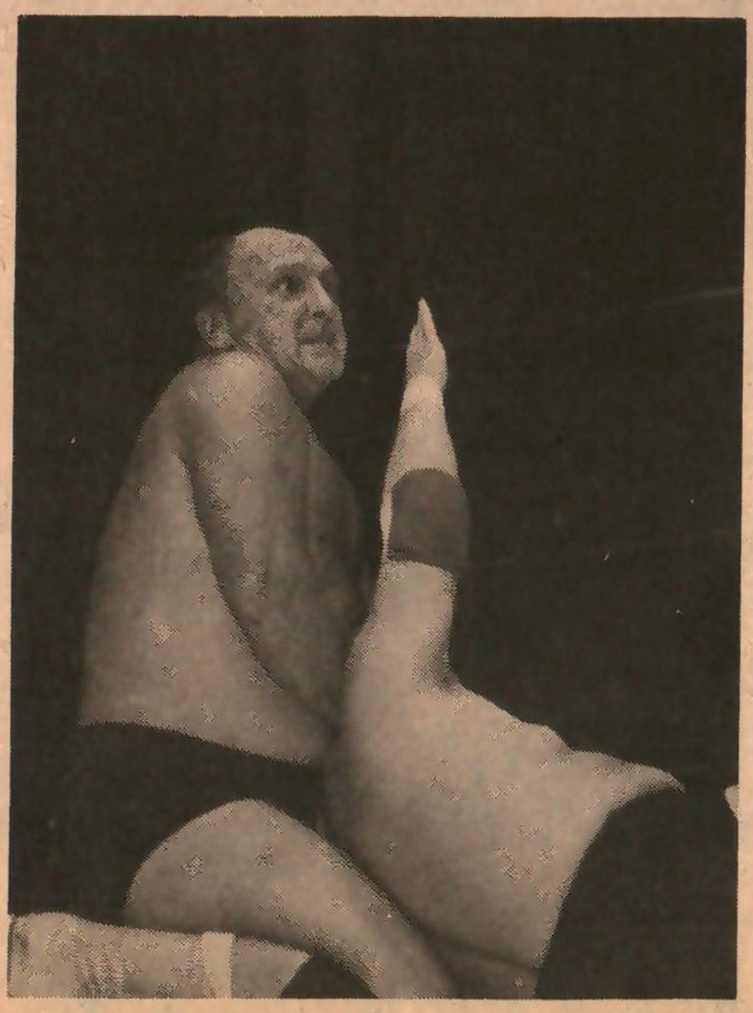
KILLER KARL KOX

(Continued from Page 39)





Killer Kox bellows in pain as Rhodes slams his avenging fists into the villain's mid-section (above). Kox believes he may finish off Dusty with a painful grab of Dusty's hair (left).

veins of rage to appear on "The Tower of Power's" skin.

"If it ain't Dusty the Whale, America's favorite Mama's Boy," Kox guffawed. "Is your mama gonna come and help you tonight? Is she gonna wipe off your blood, precious little mama's boy? Maybe I should save her the trip and mail her back one of your earrings. With your ear still hooked on, little itsy bitsy mama's boy."

Rhodes became filled with rage.

He charged across the ring and rammed his skull into Kox's stomach, jarring the villainous cretin and bouncing him off the ropes. Dusty grabbed at Kox again and began pounding his face against the canvas.

Suddenly, Dusty stopped and returned to his corner.

"He said something to me and I wouldn't take that, not from him, not from anybody. I won't say what it was, but I was aware that I wasn't behaving like Dusty. My mama wouldn't have been proud of me."

That was as much as Dusty would say on the subject. He prepared for his following matches against Killer without his usual pre-match publicity. Again, when questioned, he would only respond with his declaration of disgust for Kox's wrestling philosophy.

Until their last match. Then Dusty Rhodes opened up! "All that garbage about sticks and stones is just that, garbage. If someone mouths off to you you should stop them right there.

"It wasn't that he said the truth. I can take a few lies. But mentioning my dear mama. How dare he? I wasn't talking about it because I really wasn't sure how to explain it. This guy is a filthy ape. Maybe someday he'll join the human race and stand up from his four paws. But I kind of doubt it.

"Now all I care about is closing his mouth with my fists. If I resort to his ways I'm really no better than he is. And everyone knows what Dusty Rhodes is all about."

In that bout, Rhodes completely punished Kox. He used every conceivable hold he ever learned, a wide smile accompanying his every move. Then came the bionic elbow. It crushed Kox into the mat and left a huge indentation where the ugly face of Kox had been.

"Whale?" Dusty laughed loudly. "The only one spurting is Kox. And I do like that red water of his." □

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APARTMENT WRESTLER

(Continued from Page 43)

Improvising a hold, Jenny has her opponent in a terribly painful position with little she can do about escaping.

woman, then announced, "Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. There's no need for any announcements. However,

there is one thing everyone should know. The women have decided this is to be a match to the finish. Even if both women are too exhausted to continue, they will be taken back to their rooms for a three minute rest, and then continue. This will happen until one woman is the clear winner. Ladies, begin."

Emmanuelle let out an inhuman shriek and then leaped across the room. She was reckless, wild, driven by excitement. Her arms and legs flew with demented movements, understood only by her

The head becomes Jenny's prime target as she tries to make the beautiful Emmanuelle give up in the heat of action.

instincts. Even Jenny stood transfixed by this awesome display of movement. It was the most beautifully physical sight anyone had ever witnessed.

For Jenny, the spell was broken at the moment of contact. A brutally thrown forearm smashed across Jenny's face, pain twisting the victim's classic features. However, Jenny didn't remain a victim for long. She took one step back, let the flailing Emmanuelle strike at the air. Then Jenny rushed in, perfectly driving her shoulder into Emmanuelle's belly. The stunned grappler bent double and hurtled to the carpet. *(Continued on page 62)*

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☐ Aug. 1959	☐ Oct. 1960	☐ June 1961	☐ Aug. 1962	☐ Jan. 1964
		☐ July 1961	☐ Oct. 1962	☐ Feb. 1964
		☐ Aug. 1961	☐ Nov. 1962	☐ Mar. 1964
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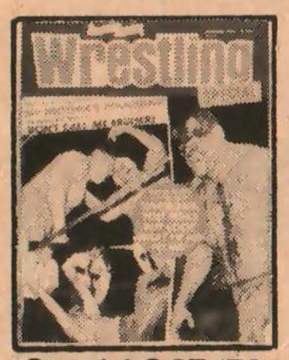
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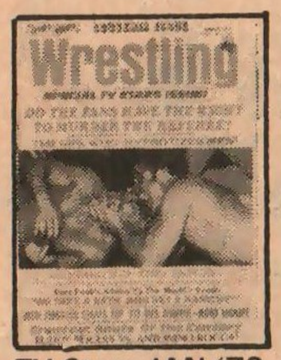
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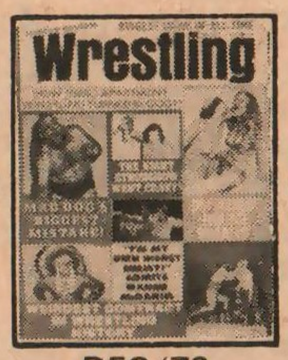
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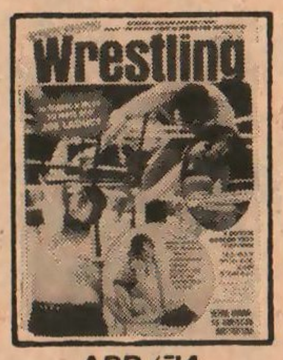
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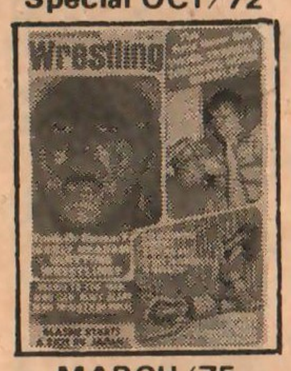
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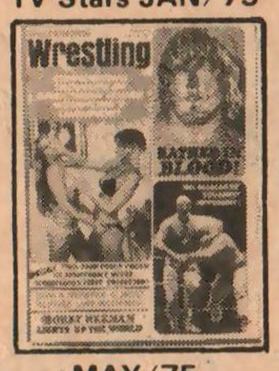
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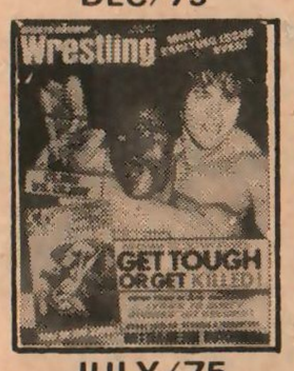
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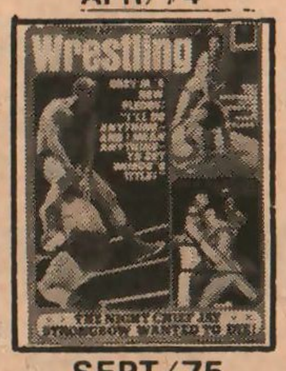
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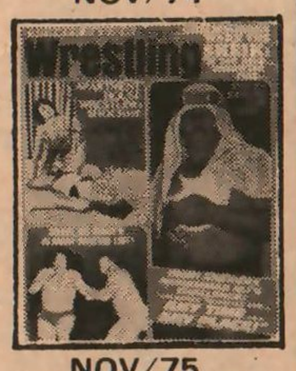
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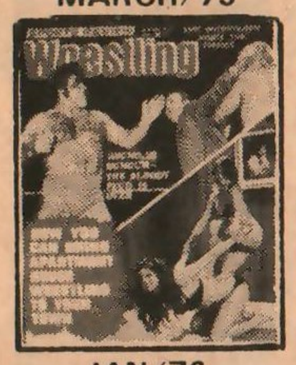
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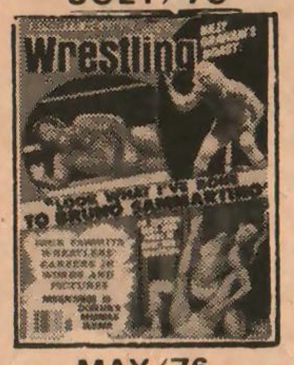
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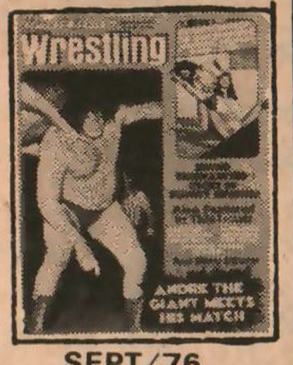
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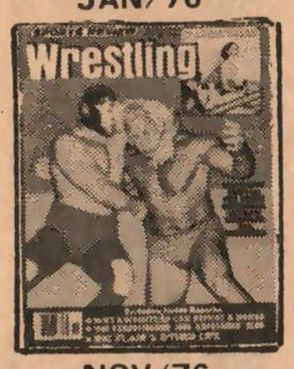
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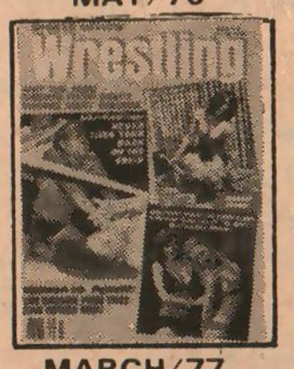
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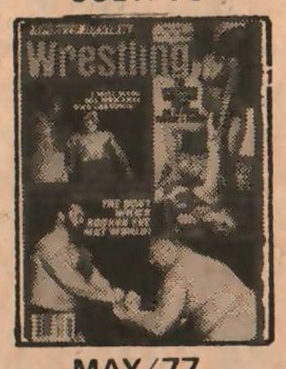
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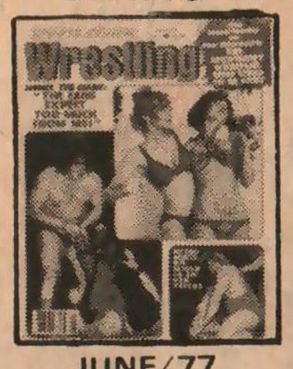
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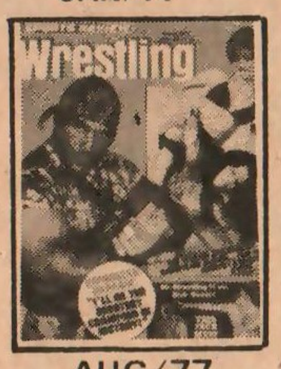
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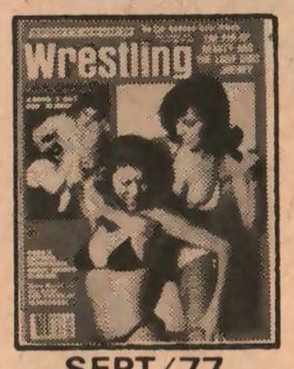
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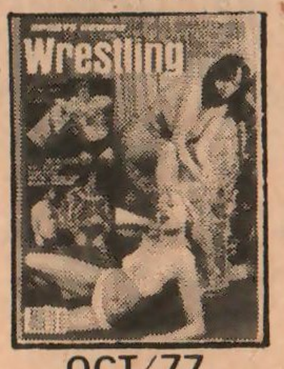
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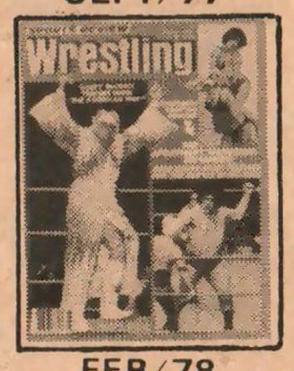
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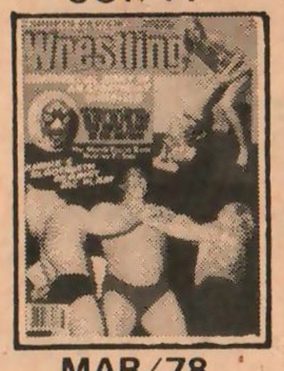
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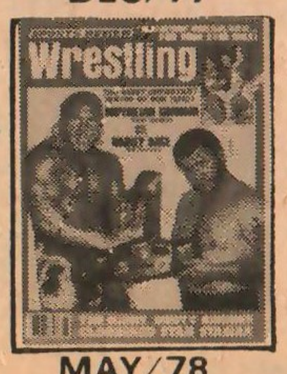
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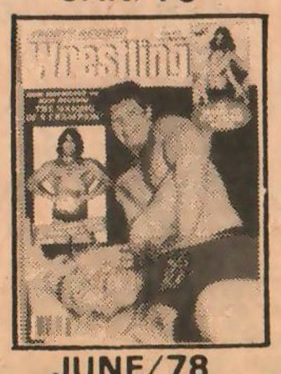
JUNE/78

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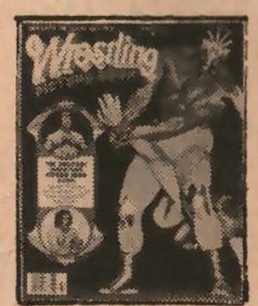
Pic. Bk/Win 75

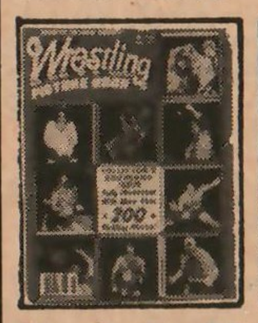
Pic. Bk/Spr 76

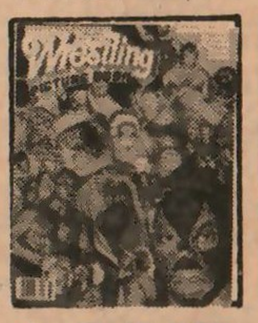
Pic. Bk/Sum 76

Pic. Bk/Fall 76


Pic. Bk/Win 76

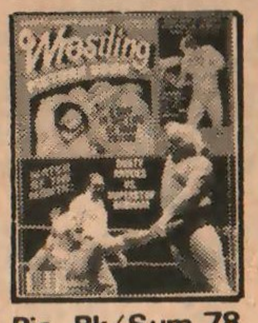
Pic. Bk/Mar 77


Pic. Bk/May 77


Pic. Bk/Fall 77

Pic. Bk/Win 77

Pic. Bk/Spr 78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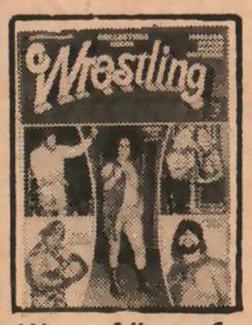
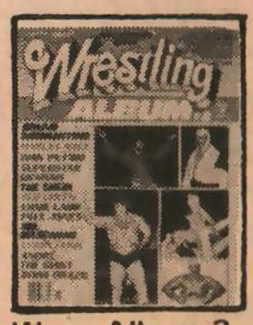

Wres. Album 1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GREATEST BATTLES

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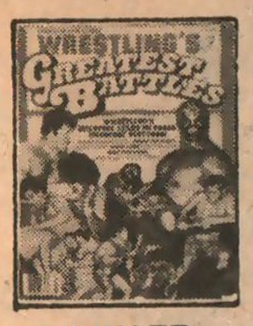
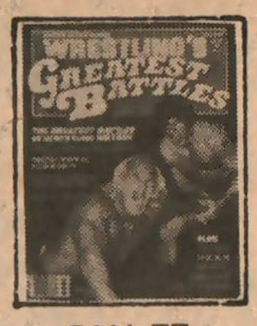
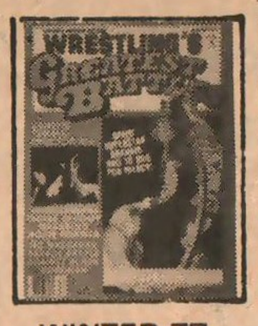

JULY 77


FALL 77


WINTER 77

SPRING 78

SUMMER 78

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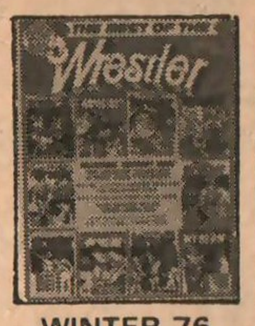
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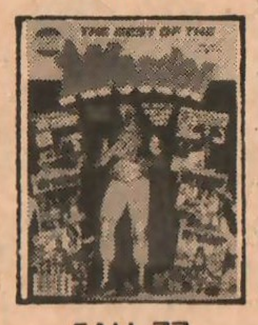
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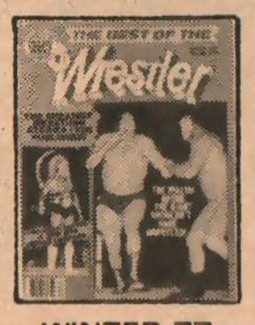
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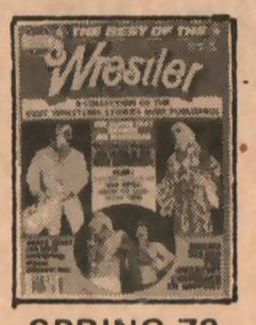
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SUPERSTARS

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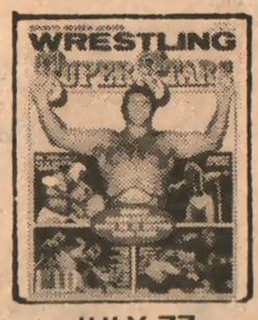
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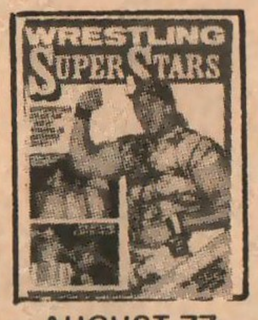
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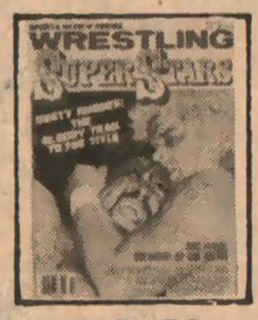
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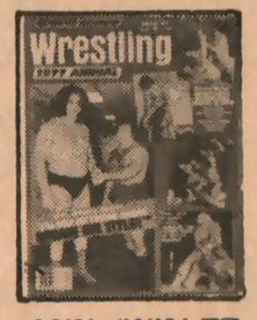
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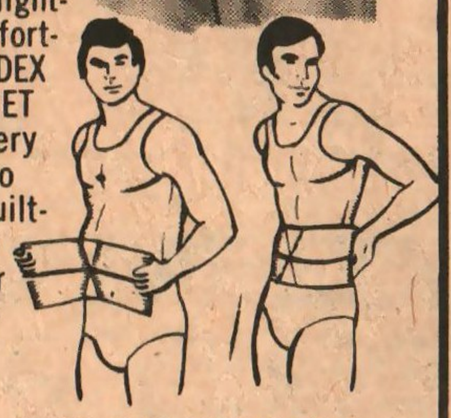

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APARTMENT WRESTLER

(Continued from Page 59)

The bout is nearly over as Jenny puts the finishing touches on Emmanuelle. It was an all-time classic encounter.

Emmanuelle quickly recovered; the days of intensive training paid off. Her legs immediately shot up, catching Jenny right under the chin. It sent the attacker sprawling backwards.

There was no let up in the action. Instantly, Emmanuelle was on her feet and rushing. Jenny also recovered and started in. There was a harsh smack of flesh as the two women collided. Somehow, they remained on their feet, arms wrapped around each other's body.

Like a single body gone berserk, the two women never released their grasps as they tripped and stumbled across the room. Nails and fists found soft targets as belly and breasts took an incredible beating. Every so often, a savage blow to the head made a woman's legs go rubbery and eyes would roll expressionless. However, that lasted for only a second. Something made both women almost immune to the pain.

This might have gone on all night if Emmanuelle hadn't kicked at Jenny's legs,

knocking the blonde to the carpet. Emmanuelle leaped on her fallen victim, only to have Jenny raise her knee quickly, sending it straight and hard for her opponent's belly. Emmanuelle let out a hideous gasp and rolled away. For the first time, one of the woman couldn't recover from the pain. Emmanuelle was hurt.

Jenny took quick advantage. She scurried to her victim, fists and knees flashing. For over 30 seconds, the only sounds in the room were fists smacking flesh and a beautiful woman's cries.

Then Jenny tried to end it all. She grabbed Emmanuelle's leg and twisted it back and around. The brunette's body turned in ways nature never expected. It took a brutalizing punishment. Jenny grinned.

It took all of Emmanuelle's strength to escape. With awesomely superb coordination, she managed to get all her weight behind a blow to the side of Jenny's head. If the blow wasn't perfect, Emmanuelle's shoulder would pop out of its socket like a bullet from a gun. But this was the match to risk everything. The risk paid off.

Jenny went tumbling to the side. She was barely conscious. Emmanuelle couldn't take advantage of the moment; she could hardly move. The only sound in the room were the women's moans as their bodies refused to obey their minds' commands.

Moll stepped in. "Do you want the three-minute rest period?" he asked. The women turned to one another, then nodded simultaneously. It took all their strength to eventually stand and stumble into their respective bedrooms.

Both brawlers went right to the shower, turned on the cold water full blast, and stayed under for the full time. They

(Continued on page 64)

TRIBUTE TO YOUR WIFE
A Wonderful Happiness Gift!

The Wife...just a simple little sentence of only two words. I suppose you could say, it is not earth shaking. Nothing to get excited about some would say. But, this little sentence describes one of God's most precious creations. And they come in such a variety of shapes and forms...Big ones, little ones, beautiful and homely ones, but they all have one thing in common. And that is the destiny of the world is in her hands. The Weaker Sex...? Don't you believe it. I gave up this belief shortly after I found out just who Santa Claus was. Lets face it men...Pound for pound she is the most powerful force on God's earth. In most cases, she is the quiet one, of a promise made in Heaven. She is content to stay in the background, doing the things she is expected to do, and almost always asking for very little in return. But, no sculpture has ever created a more beautiful piece of work, and no artist ever painted a portrait so lovely as this creation called...Wife, even with her rumpled robe and with curlers in her hair..She has the ability to show tenderness that will melt your heart, and in the same instant display a brittle hardness equal to any man. She is the equal partner of our most blessed institution...the home. And a home that is without a wife is like a rudderless ship floundering on a sea of confusion. Her delicate ways can sooth a man into tranquillity and yet her strength can provoke him almost to the animal stage. In her duties of making a home, if all the energy she puts forth was converted into power, it would stagger the shoulders of a big...big man. Her innocent little ways can put fear into the heart of the most high pressured salesman, but, she will buy the cookies of a little brown eyed girl scout, who happens to knock on the door. She has the strength to forgive when she has been hurt almost beyond repair. Very few men can do this. She can out maneuver the smartest of lawyers in a verbal discussion with her words of simplicity and in the next breath ask if the Dodgers has made a touchdown yet. People in high places just never impress her, but she will work like mad to get to the P.T.A. to see her child perform in a little school play. She keeps a personal vendetta with death, and brings forth one of God's most precious gifts, a tiny life in a bundle of pink or blue. She takes the extra burden and never falters. And never has wrath been shown so savagely as it is when she thinks that something or someone will harm her offspring. And as the golden years of your life approach, you learn to love her even more deeply. And you just can't visualize your life with out her. And as time slowly consumes your days, your need for her seems to grow and grow. You watch the wrinkles gather on her face, and the silver of her hair is more visible each morning, and your mind goes back to younger days, when youth was so dominate, and you find that even now, she is more beautiful, more graceful, and you thank God for all these years together. I think that beyond a shadow of a doubt, she is the most unique creation on earth. Mine has made my life so rich, and so gracious and I can safely say, Thank you God for this person, for this hand that I hold and for this love that I have for...My Wife.

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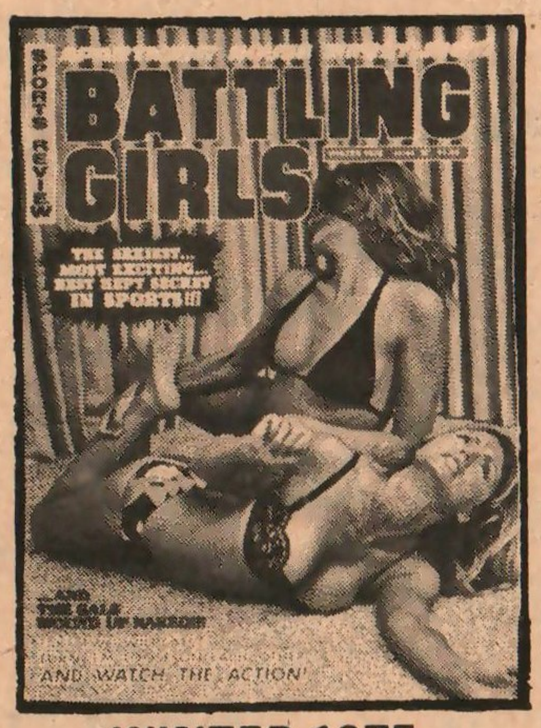

WINTER 1975

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APARTMENT WRESTLER

(Continued from Page 63)

revived slightly, but their pain didn't deteriorate. Both walked gingerly back to the field of battle.

The match began again. This time, the action was awkwardly ferocious. Emmanuelle's right leg limped badly, making her lunges more like controlled stumbling. It soon became apparent Jenny couldn't lift her right arm higher than her shoulder. When she tried, her face contorted into a hideous mask of pain.

More punishment is taken by Emmanuelle as Jenny again tries to force her into submission late in the match.

Still, the battle continued without let-up. Powerful punches and brilliant take-downs made the action astounding. The women reeled, fell and scrambled back to their feet. A series of beautiful maneuvers, compensating perfectly for the injuries, showed why these two women were internationally famous. Their injuries brought majesty to their greatness.

The advantage changed hands almost as quickly as it was won. Each woman did a spectacular maneuver, only to be unable to follow through. One time, Jenny had Emmanuelle's arm twisted, and her leg almost bent back double.

A last-ditch effort by Emmanuelle is going great at the moment, but it is not enough for her to win the match.

Tears rolled down the brunette's cheeks, though she did not cry out. She escaped with an incredibly convulsive shake of her body, somehow breaking the hold. Jenny went stumbling back.

A little later in the match, Emmanuelle had Jenny in a savage headlock. Jenny flopped and punched and clawed to no avail. It looked like the end until she grabbed Emmanuelle's leg and brought them both flopping to the carpet. Jenny had perfectly positioned the fall so Emmanuelle fell on her side, letting Jenny escape unharmed.

It seemed as if the match would go on forever. Then Jenny gambled all on one move. She would either win with this

or lose because of it.

Swiftly, she wrapped her arms around Emmanuelle's midsection. Every last ounce of strength was used to crush the power out of Emmanuelle's body. Jenny stood like an Amazon as Emmanuelle was hoisted high in the air. Jenny's stature seemed to grow as Emmanuelle's body appeared to shrink from her agony. The brunette beauty's limbs battered her tormentor harmlessly; no strength remained. Finally, Jenny's arms snapped open from the strain. Emmanuelle fell limply to the carpet.

Jenny's arms trembled convulsively as she stood over her opponent. Falling on top of her foe, she lay upon the beaten beauty in exhuastion. Emmanuelle squirmed under the weight but not with force. It was simply instinct trying to do what the body no longer could. Emmanuelle was completely beaten.

The match was over. Jenny tried to get up but her arms collapsed from the weight. She made her way to her feet sidling over to the wall and squirming up. Her arms were useless. It would be days before she could even lift a glass. Every muscle from her shoulder to fingers had been sprained beyond endurance.

Emmanuelle was carried into the bedroom like a fallen queen. Even in defeat, her beauty could not be denied. Some say she was unconscious, others claimed to have heard the sounds of weeping.

Both women were too exhausted to emerge from their rooms for more than 24 hours. When they left the penthouse, neither woman talked about a forthcoming match. Their greatest battle may have been their last. □

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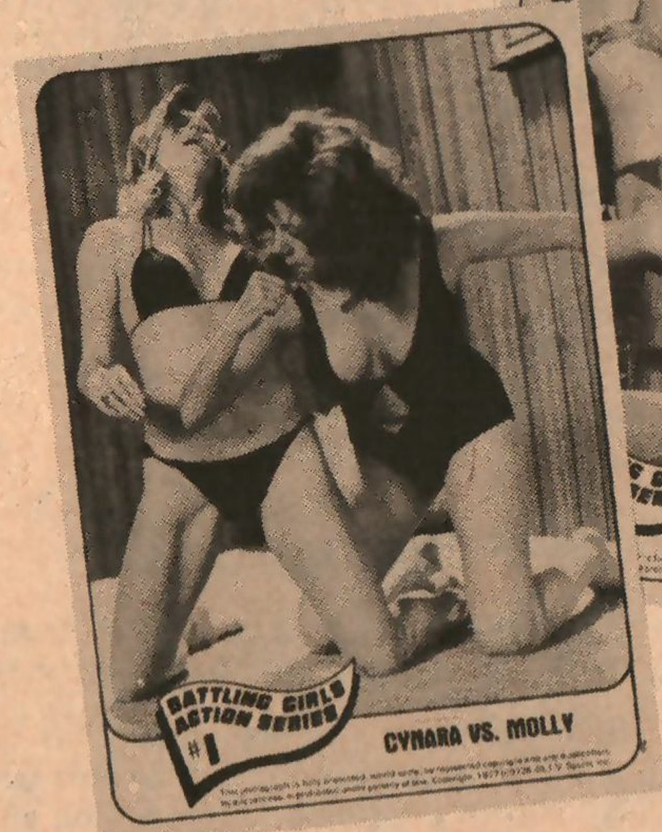

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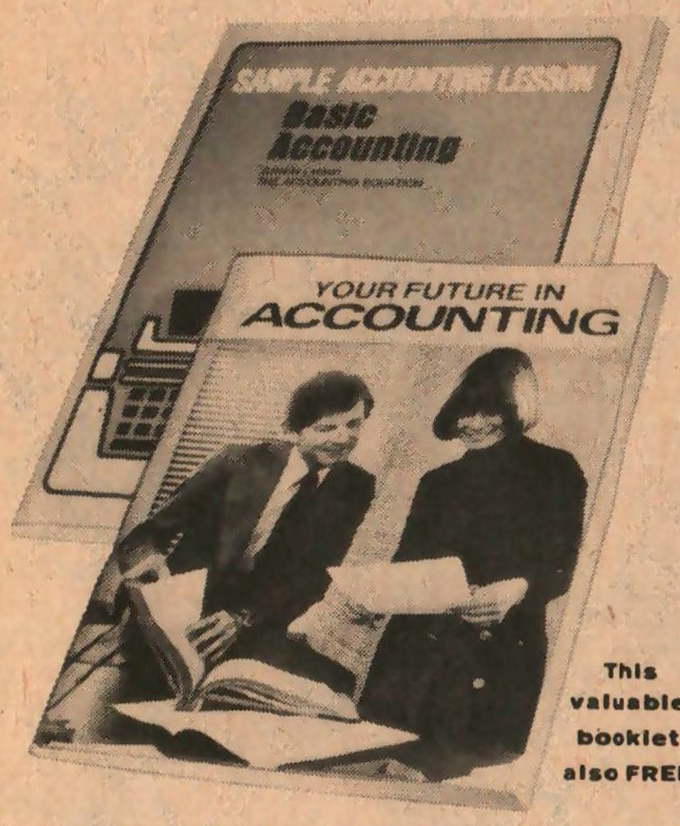

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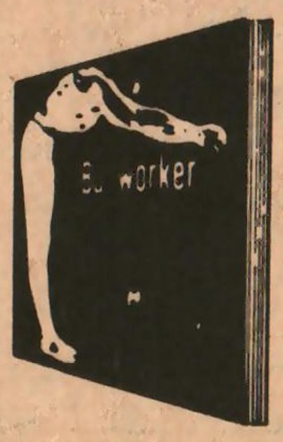

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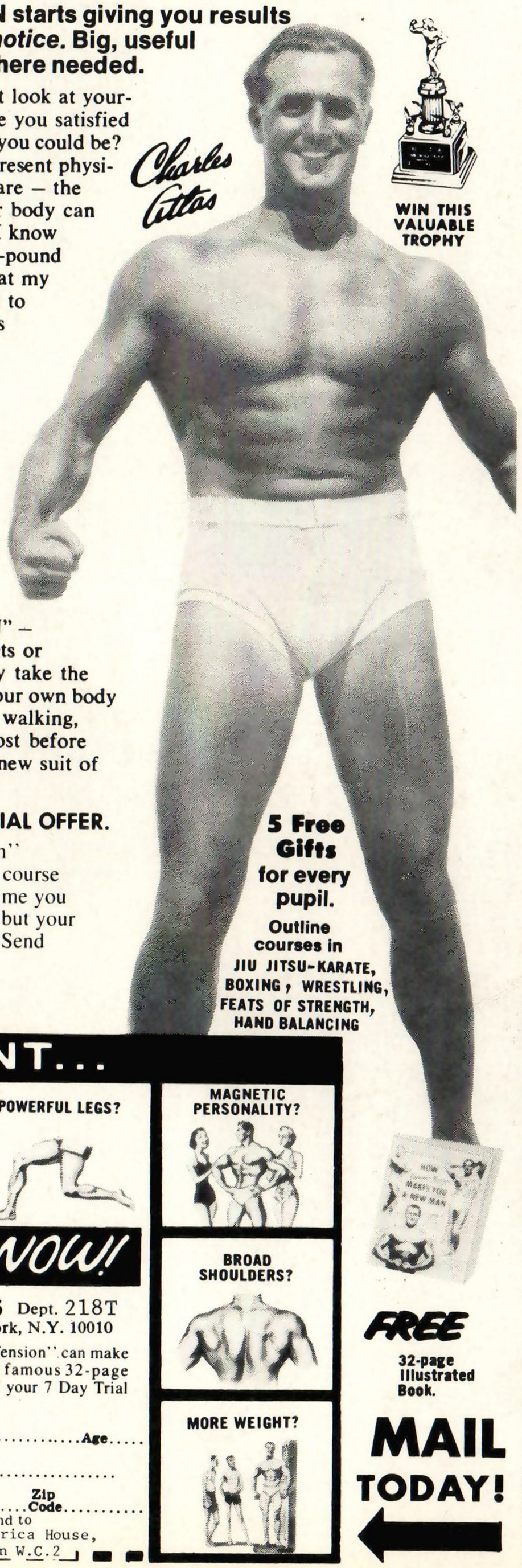
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